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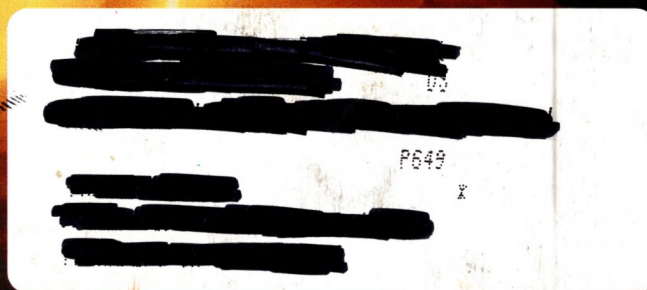
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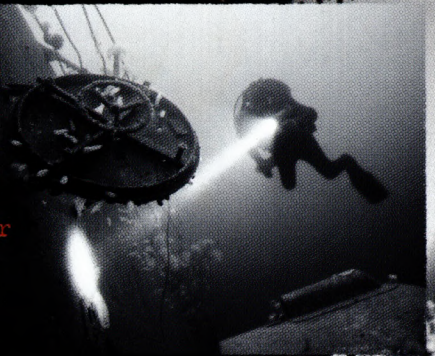
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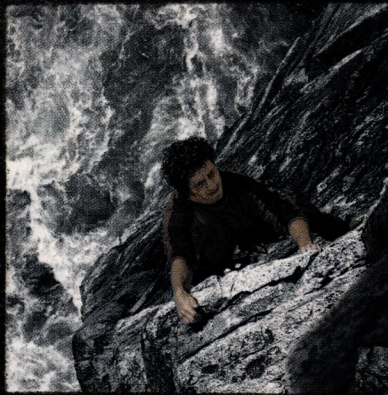
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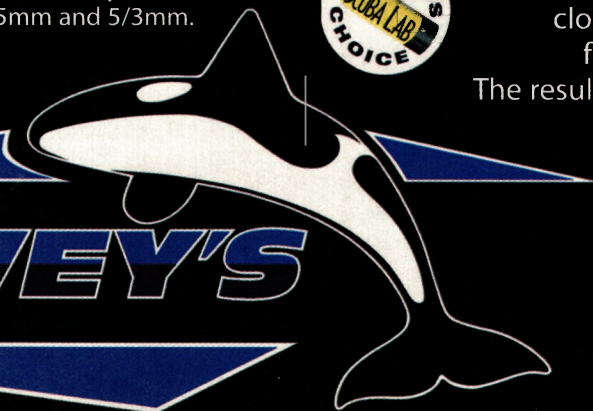
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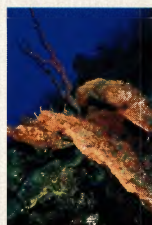


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ABOUT THE COVER:

Diver's inferno, Kona, Hawaii

Photo/Doug Perrine, Seapics



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Background photo: Clown
Anemonefish, Indo-Pacific.
Photo/Marty Snyderman

Skin Diver®

Volume Fifty • Number Eight

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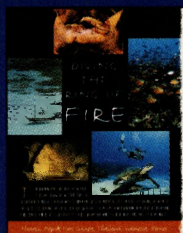
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- Learn about the Roatan U/W Photo/Video Championship.
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Skin Diver ON LOCATION



HAWAII, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, INDONESIA, THAILAND, BORNEO

The earth is a mosaic of tectonic plates surrounding a fiery core. As the earth rotates, the liquid layer of the core spins, creating a need for relief. Volcanoes provide ventilation, and the world's most active volcanoes encircle the Pacific Basin, forming the "Ring of Fire." The magma flowing from their peaks adds to the earth's crust, both above and below the sea. Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Thailand and the island of Borneo were all born of this fire. But volcanism not only creates land mass, it also leaves fertile soils, mineral deposits and geothermal activity—the perfect platform for life. Underwater, these structures provide incredible diving experiences.

To begin *Skin Diver's* journey around the Ring of Fire, we alight in Thailand's Andaman Sea. It thrives with cuttlefish, moray eels, Zebra Sharks

and colorful corals. Topside, it's surrounded by a rich culture famous for its smiling people.

South and east of Thailand is the island of Borneo. On the north side, in the Malaysian state of Sabah, we encounter Bumphead Parrotfish, Manta Rays, Gray Reef Sharks and incredible shipwrecks.

Stretching in all directions to the south are the 13,000 islands of Indonesia. Dives off Bali, Komodo, Irian Jaya, Sangihe and Lembeh Strait feature everything from Harlequin Shrimp to Black-tipped Sharks. Above water are smoking volcanoes, mangroves, rain forests and snow-covered mountains—an all-inclusive terrestrial experience.

We then venture over to Papua New Guinea and hear the rumbling of Tuvuvuv. Its lava has recently spilled over, leaving a town to rebuild. Offshore, rich waters cradle reefs laden with Ribbontail Eels, Caledonian Stingrays and more.

At the hub of it all are the Hawaiian Islands. Off the Big Island, hot magma falls into cool waters, and makes for a dive that truly sizzles.

To explore the Ring of Fire, turn to page 53.



BONAIRE

Get out of bed, sleepy head. *Skin Diver* editor, Ty Sawyer is diving from dusk 'til dawn, and you won't want to miss it. Bonaire's dark waters glow with bioluminescent creatures. Discover the gladiators of the sand, their wily ways and why Ty is already planning a return trip.

Join us for moonlit dives, on page 42.



LITTLE CAYMAN

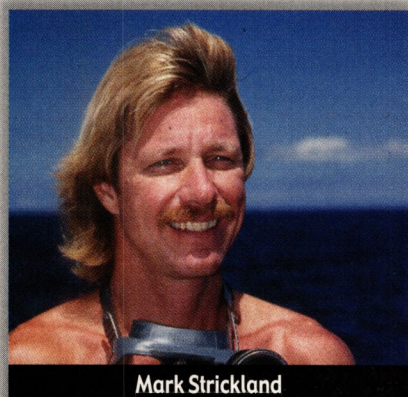
Bloody Bay Wall is not all this diving mainstay has to offer. Lucas Ledges, Splitville and

Rockhouse are sites begging for attention. And, Eagle Rays, Southern Stingrays and Flying Gurnards pilfer through the sand at Jackson Bight amidst Green Rope Sponges and purple seafans.

Get off the wall and into the Diver's Sandbox on page 78.

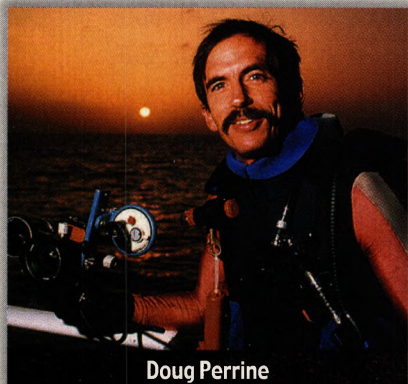
CONTRIBUTORS

WHEN ASKED TO RECALL A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE in his current homeland of Thailand, MARK STRICKLAND said, "In an outdoor cafe, savoring my first Thai sunset, I sat down to a bowl of seafood soup. With the first spoonful, flames spread over my sunburned lips, the hiccups started and beads of sweat tickled my forehead. Then a terrific shrieking came from the tree overhead. Someone's pet monkey had escaped and was amusing itself at my expense. The locals roared with laughter, and I had to chuckle too—I'd just experienced dinner and entertainment, Thai style!" 🐒



Mark Strickland

PEOPLE HAVE A HARD TIME FIGURING OUT DOUG PERRINE's accent. Currently a resident of Hawaii, he previously lived in Miami, Grand Cayman, the Bahamas, Pohnpei and Morocco. But sit him down with folks from the Lone Star State and the native Texas drawl starts to resurface. And, on the eve of the presidential elections, Perrine successfully received former Texas governor George W. Bush's approval for a sanctuary for the endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles in Texas waters. A true victory for marine conservationists everywhere. 🐢



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THE PACIFIC RIM HAS BEEN BURNING AND RUMBLING FOR EONS. Most of the islands and countries, from Hawaii through the Indo-Pacific, owe their very existence to upheavals of the Earth's molten core. This volcanic activity continues to change the topography in dramatic outpourings of hot magma, even today—especially at places such as the Kona coast of Hawaii, Sangihe Island of Indonesia and the smoking mountains of Papua New Guinea.

Scientists believe this latter part of the world to be the nexus of marine life, ground zero. For divers, this means a mind-boggling variety of just about everything that lives under the sea, and in concentrations that will cause your inner diver to shake his head in disbelief. Much of the region (particularly Indonesia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea) remains unexplored, making this one of the true last frontiers for divers.

For our writers, these destinations represent a lifetime of longing. In pursuit of his Hawaii

The Hot Zone

story, writer Fred Garth came face to face with the hot stuff, which he vividly described as “...hemorrhaging terra firma...” and the “freakiest” thing he’s ever done while diving (for Fred, that’s quite a statement).

Astrid Witte Mahaney and Casey Mahaney finally gave in to their ultimate journey desires and came away breathless and unsated after experiencing the raw wilderness of Papua New Guinea’s offshore wonderland. And Denise Nielsen Tackett and Larry Tackett now spend more time exploring remote and untouched spits of sand and coconut palm throughout Indonesia than they do at their home in West Virginia. I’m sure their permanent change of address will cross my desk soon. Their story spills over with exotic encounters from Komodo, Bali, Irian Jaya, Lembeh Strait and Sangihe Island, including diving over volcanic bubbling sands off Mahangetang. Finally, dive writer and inveterate explorer, Doug Perrine, takes us on a journey through Malaysian Borneo worthy of dive worship. For diving off Sipadan, Layang Layang, Mabul and Labuan is like passing through the pearly gates into the good place.

Speaking of good places, I got the chance to explore Bonaire in a new “light.” Since diving freedom and 24-hour access to its reefs are its claim to fame, my buddy and I decided we would dive only from dusk to dawn. Yep, a whole trip of night diving. What was it like? Well, both exhilarating and strange. But one thing is for certain: The reef doesn’t sleep at night. And, really, what good is all that sleep when you could be diving? 🐟

TY SAWYER, EDITOR

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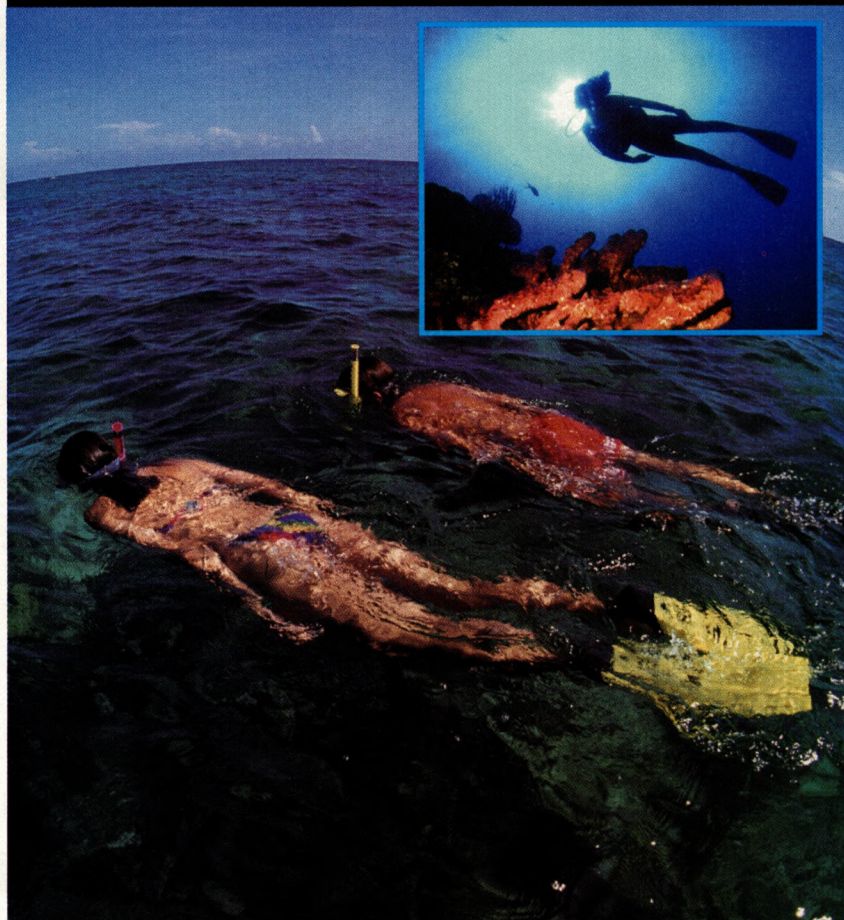
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Some people are born with it—ambition, drive, an overwhelming desire to succeed. For others it's the insatiable itch to push the limits.

Recently, Ronny Frimann, a Norwegian diver, got the itch. So he looked up diving world records and found one he thought would be easy to break—the longest time spent underwater on scuba. He rounded up some sponsors, got a tank of water and plopped it down in the middle of the Oslo Spektrum (Oslo, Norway) during the International Photo Trade

Photos/Courtesy R. Frimann



Frimann was all smiles after emerging from the water.

Fair, "Photography 2001." After all, what good's breaking a record if nobody sees you do it?

On March 15, a few minutes before Frimann slipped into the water, he felt the first pangs of regret.

"I was sure that the record would be easy to beat," said Frimann. "But when I got into my gear, I regretted agreeing to the attempt." The itch, it seemed, had been scratched. But he sucked it up, and in he went.

And there he was, in a fishbowl, people gathering around, some with their faces pressed to the glass, some sitting cross-legged and sipping hot coffee, no doubt sharing commentary with each other.

"How long's he been in there?"

"Not even an hour."

"How much longer 'til he can get out?"

"About 50 hours."

"Two days?"

"Yeah."

"Oh."—"What if he has to pee?"

"Hmmm..."

He strapped on 50 pounds of scuba gear to battle through 51 hours and 4 minutes of being sweaty, wet and cold, and didn't jump out screaming. At one point, Frimann actually attempted to get a little shut-eye.

"I just wanted to sleep, but laying down on the tank hurt," Frimann said. "The first night I slept a few hours, but not as much as I had hoped. Time seemed to stand still."

Without any restful sleep, by the second day Frimann began hallucinating.

A Helluva Itch

"The strange dreams came often. And lots of times I had out-of-body experiences."

Witnesses can verify those did not include out-of-water experiences.

But time wasn't standing still, and Ronny Frimann eventually emerged from his fishbowl more than two days later, feeling exhilarated and successful.

"I felt like I was in heaven," Frimann recalled. "A new world record was mine. The mask was removed, and I could breath normal again."

So in the end, was it all worth it?

"Although the attempt was a big challenge, which I completed, there's one thing I'm sure of: I'll NEVER do it again."

Bite your tongue. Frimann's next itch will be scratched by attempting the strongest current dive ever (approximately 29 miles per hour) in Saltstraumen, Bodo, Norway. He will jump from a helicopter, down into the whirlpool, where he'll be sucked to the bottom, then he plans to hang on for a 1.24 mile ride.

He needs an ointment for that itch.

—Tiffany H. Carey

SHARK WEEK

Break out the chain mail! The Discovery Channel's Shark Week blasts out of the water and back onto TV screens this August 12–19. It's a week overflowing with exciting shark

action, up-close shark adventures with host Nigel Marven and a shark show like nothing you've ever seen. Kicking off the week on August 12, *Air Jaws: Sharks of South Africa* showcases recently-filmed, jaw-dropping footage of huge Great White Sharks taking to the air—literally launching themselves some 15



Photo/Lionel Pozzoli

DO NOT BE AFRAID

How many times have you heard about all the underwater pho-

tography competitions taking place all over the world and you avoid entering because you think you aren't taking photographs that are good enough for a competition? In fact, a large number of novice and amateur U/W photographers have won a large number of competitions. In 1999, Patti Baugh won Best of Show at the 18th Annual Beach Photo Competition sponsored by the Northern California Underwater Photographic Society. At the same competition last year, Marilyn Walker, won Best of Show. Walker was a novice as well.



Photo/Patti Baugh

Best of Show, 18th Annual Beach Photo Competition.

As an avid U/W photographer and competition junkie, I've learned a few things about succeeding in my photography and in the competitions that I'd like to share with you.

- Know your equipment and its limitations.
- Do an exposure test in confined water, record the results. Figure out the compensation for ocean open water, or shoot the same subject on three consecutive f/stops in the ocean and use the best exposure that you achieved (bracket). Remember what exposures provide the best results, record them and carry them with you.
- Shoot, shoot, shoot! When you find a good subject, shoot as many frames as possible. This is the way professionals get their best shots, too.
- If you're not having much luck on your own, find a good instructor to tell you a few tricks. Even professionals continue to be coached.
- Judges like to see the following merits: good exposure, pleasant composition, no backscatter and isolation of the main subject.

Imitating winning shots can help novices create their own style and techniques, while improving their photography. Do not be afraid to get out there. The experience and camaraderie that exists in a group of U/W photographers is unforgettable.

—Al Huelga

Try your luck at the Roatan Photo Competition. For more, visit at www.skin-diver.com.



Photo/Laurie Huelga

Second Place, Curaçao Photo Competition.

feet above the water in acrobatic behavior normally associated with dolphins or Killer Whales. *Air Jaws* is the first full-length documentary to cover this stunning activity.

In its 14th must-see year, Shark Week is one of the summer's most anticipated TV events. Last year, more than 22 million people tuned

in to watch host Nigel Marven dive (no cage) with sharks.

Shark Week airs in prime time Sunday, August 12, through Friday, August 17, followed by an eight-hour marathon on Sunday, August 19.

For more information, check out www.discovery.com.

Museum of Skindiving History

The Museum of Skindiving History, opened to the public on July 14, 2001, in Huntington Beach, California. Housed in a wing of the International Surfing Museum, the museum's exhibits feature vintage skindiving equipment, early film, still photographs and video of the sport's pioneers.

The museum is the brainchild of Ron Mullins of San Clemente and Vance Carriere of Long Beach. Both

avid students of the sport's history, they realized they weren't alone last year. According to Carriere, a few local divers threw what was to



be a small party honoring the sport's pioneers. "We had more than 700 people show up, from as far away as South Africa, Australia, Europe and the Middle East," he says. "With that level of interest, the next logical step was to create a permanent exhibit."

Carriere added that the museum will be an ongoing endeavor, continually growing and evolving. "We're still video taping interviews of early pioneers, and several people have contacted us with rare and unusual artifacts and film footage."

The museum and its parent, the Society for the Preservation of Skindiving History, are nonprofit organizations run exclusively by volunteers.

For information, call (877) SWIM-FIN or visit www.skindivinghistory.com.

Readers Speak Out

Getting Cheeky

We are a group of 20- and 30-somethings in NYC who enjoy diving as a group. We were really offended by your choice of the cover photo for May—what's up with the girl in the tiny bikini with both butt cheeks hanging out? Surely scuba is an awesome enough sport to sell itself; it doesn't need the same sexism so ubiquitous in other ads connected with it. Please stop perpetuating tired, old stereotypes of women and rethink your photo layouts!

—Lili Berley, via e-mail

Dude, Nice Shot

I have been impressed with your magazine since I started reading it. I am particularly impressed with the photos your staff manages to provide each month. Take the May 2001 issue. For starters, the cover shot is magnificent! Excellent in every way except one. I can't seem to get past the cover for some reason. Is there any way to get that picture without all those words cluttering up the view? I'm having



a real hard time checking out the the dolphin...errr, I mean dolphins.

—Anthony James, Perrysburg, Ohio

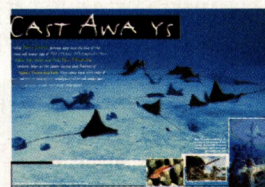
Some Things Are Worth Waiting For

In the recent *Skin Diver* (May 2001) there was a call for divers to oppose the ban on shark feeding. Although I have never taken part in a shark feeding dive, they are probably safe given the large number that have occurred over the years. However, just because they are safe does not make it correct. We teach divers not to harass other sea creatures and to never touch the coral. But when it comes to sharks and some other elusive sea creatures, we apply a different set of rules.

So, why do we have shark feeding dives in the first place? Quite simply, because many divers are not patient enough to find this elusive creature on its own terms. If you want to see a shark upclose, be patient, the experience of seeing one on your own will be far more gratifying than having one baited for you.

—Allen Sanderson, Salt Lake City, Utah

Editor's note: The correct telephone number for Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers (June 2001, *Micronesia Guide*) is (011) 691-350-2300.



Tell us what you think. Send your thoughts by e-mail to skindiver@emapusa.com, the website at www.skin-diver.com or via snail-mail to Letters to the Editor, *Skin Diver*, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

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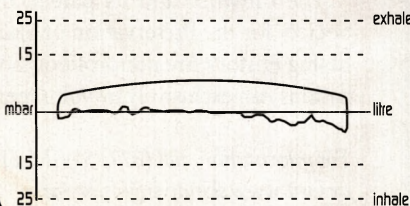
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conditions of test
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hp supply pressure : 50 bar.g
tidal volume : 2.50 litre
breath rate : 25.42 bpm
ventilation rate : 63.6 lpm

results
inhal pressure = 5.85 mbar (limit = 25 mbar)
inhal pos pressure = 1.52 mbar
exhal pressure = 7.59 mbar (limit = 25 mbar)
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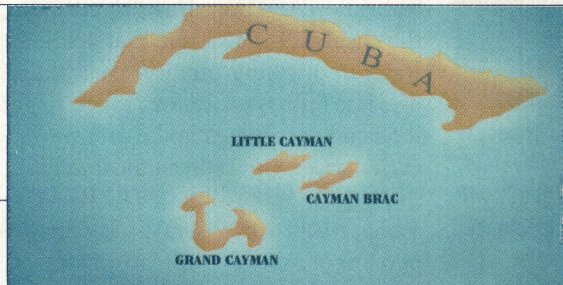


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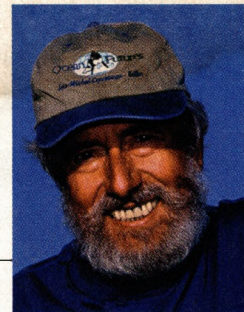


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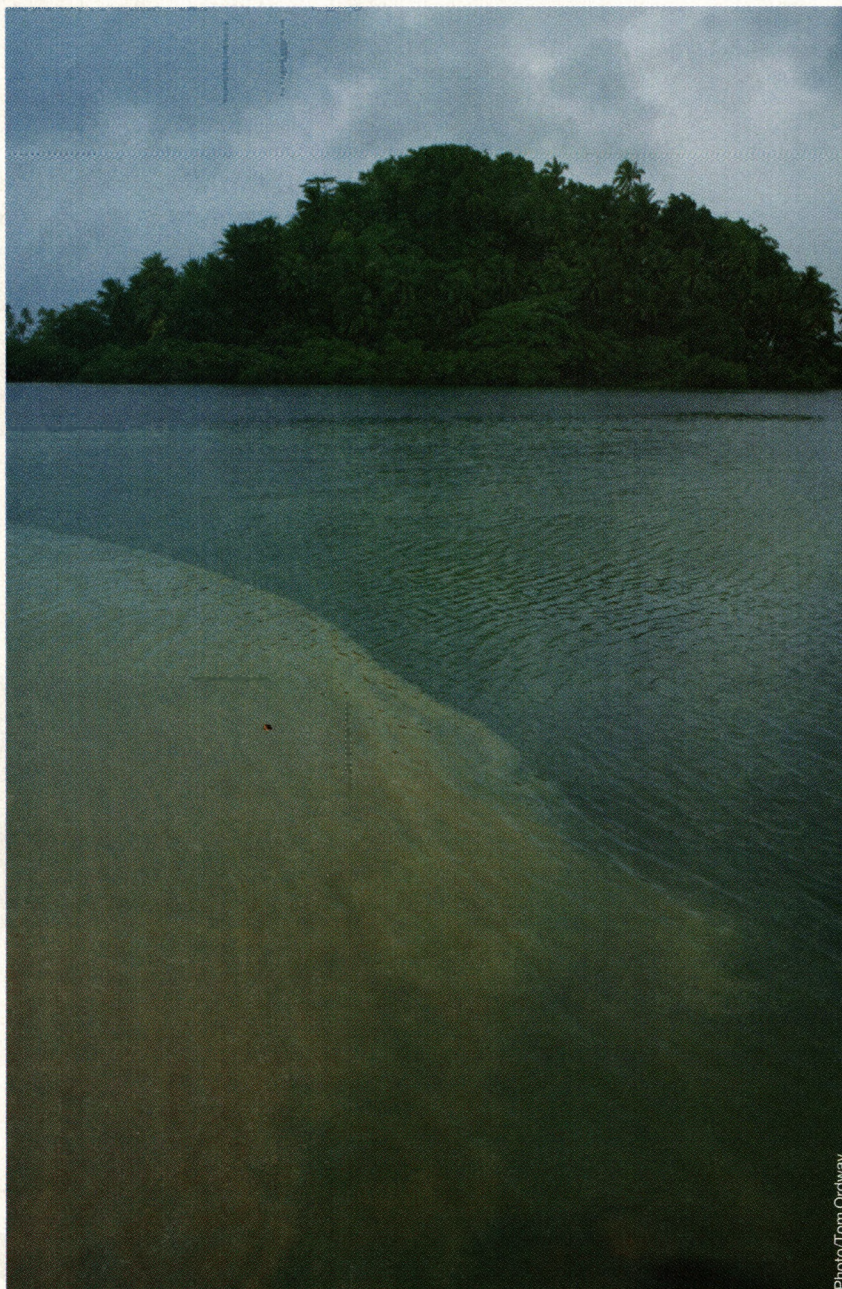
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Making Water Precious Again

BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU



Photo/Lionel Pozzoli



Photo/Tom Ordway

It is predicted that in 50 years from now, the percentage of people living in water-stressed countries will increase fivefold. Having enough water suitable for human needs will be a key concern for their existence.

LAST MARCH, THE WORLD HEALTH Organization (WHO) marked World Water Day with a sobering report card. The WHO revealed that 1.1 billion people are without clean water, and 2.4 billion are without adequate sanitation. This alone is cause for concern, but the truly dispiriting aspect of the report is that these figures remain unchanged from a decade ago.

Despite a host of technological advances that have given us many new and ingenious tools to help conserve water, in many places we continue to act as if water were an infinitely plentiful resource. That is why conserving water requires more than a technological fix. It requires a revolution in thinking. And the time for that revolution is now.

Water is scarce to begin with. Only a fraction of one percent of the water on this planet is fresh water suitable for human needs. Of that, between 70 and 90 percent is used in agriculture, where much of it goes to waste due to inefficient irrigation methods.

In fact, waste permeates our approach to water. In their book, *Natural Capitalism*, Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins pinpoint leaky urban delivery systems that squander vast amounts of water—one-third in Bombay and one-half in Manila. They expose depleted aquifers that actually draw contaminants toward overpumped wells in California's Central Valley. And they draw attention to the absurdity of a system that purifies water to drinking-quality levels, then uses it to flush waste down a toilet.

Social inequities make safe water even scarcer, especially in the developing world. According to *The World's Water*, 1998-99, by Peter Gleick, only 46 percent of Africa's population enjoys

access to safe drinking water. In Asia, the percentage is higher, around 80 percent, but that still means that, in raw numbers, some 620 million people go without.

Sanitation is even worse. Only 34 percent of people in the developing world have access to safe sanitation facilities, and in Asia and the Pacific, the number dips to 29 percent. The future is not rosy. According to the group, Population Action International, the percentage of people living in water-stressed countries will increase five-fold by 2050—even with a strong reduction in the birth rate.

What is the solution? Conservation, of course. To a significant degree, this

tenance, auto insurance, air pollution abatement, oil spill remediation, and man-hours wasted in traffic are actually hidden costs of gasoline.

In the same way, water costs are often “socialized.” Clearly, we need to change our concept of water, from infinite to finite resource. Now, some suggest that the easiest way to speed this process is to make water a commodity: to value it according to its real social costs and put it on the market, where its price will fluctuate according to the law of supply and demand.

This initiative is useful as a way of encouraging those in reduced circumstances to spend even less on water. But unless regulated with a social con-

...some suggest [we] make water a commodity: value it according to its social costs and put it on the market...

solution is reflected in a variety of technical applications that have emerged over the last decade. As Hawken and the Lovins note, subsurface drip irrigation, as pioneered in Israel, reduces water use in certain types of agricultural applications by up to 60 percent. Low-flow nozzles on domestic showerheads pump only an eighth of their former cascade, with better performance. And in some places, traditional sewage treatment plants, which pollute effluent with chemicals in order to cleanse it of pathogens, are giving way to biological methods using beneficial bacteria as the active agent of purification.

Large industries are saving water, too. A major cola company is cleaning its cans with air instead of water, cutting its rinsewater use by nearly 80 percent. Advances such as this have enabled the average American to cut water use by 20 percent in the last two decades.

Why isn't more being done? Because resource industries are often heavily subsidized. The true costs of resource consumption are hidden from consumers. Subsidies keep prices artificially low at the sales end, shifting the immense social costs onto taxpayers. The average commuter, for example, doesn't always realize that road main-

tenance, such a system could degenerate into the worst kind of profiteering.

Water is precious and should be treated as such. But it is part of the global commons, and must be available in quantity not only for human consumption, but for the biosphere. The maintenance of wetlands, rivers and other water-based ecosystems is vitally important to our survival and the survival of the countless organisms that make up the web of life.

The solution to our impending water crisis is complex. It involves a new synthesis of technology, economics and ethics. In some ways, I believe it is more about slowing our population growth rate and respecting lands and forests than it is about devising stingy new faucets—by the time we are confronted with the question of whether to turn on a spigot or not, the impact on the world's water has already been felt. The forest has been cut, the dam has been built, the pipes have been installed. Our challenge is to begin our conservation efforts further upstream, in the mind. 🐠

Editor's note: In Cousteau's article "Before Ice Melts" (May 2001), the photo caption should have read Antarctic not Arctic.

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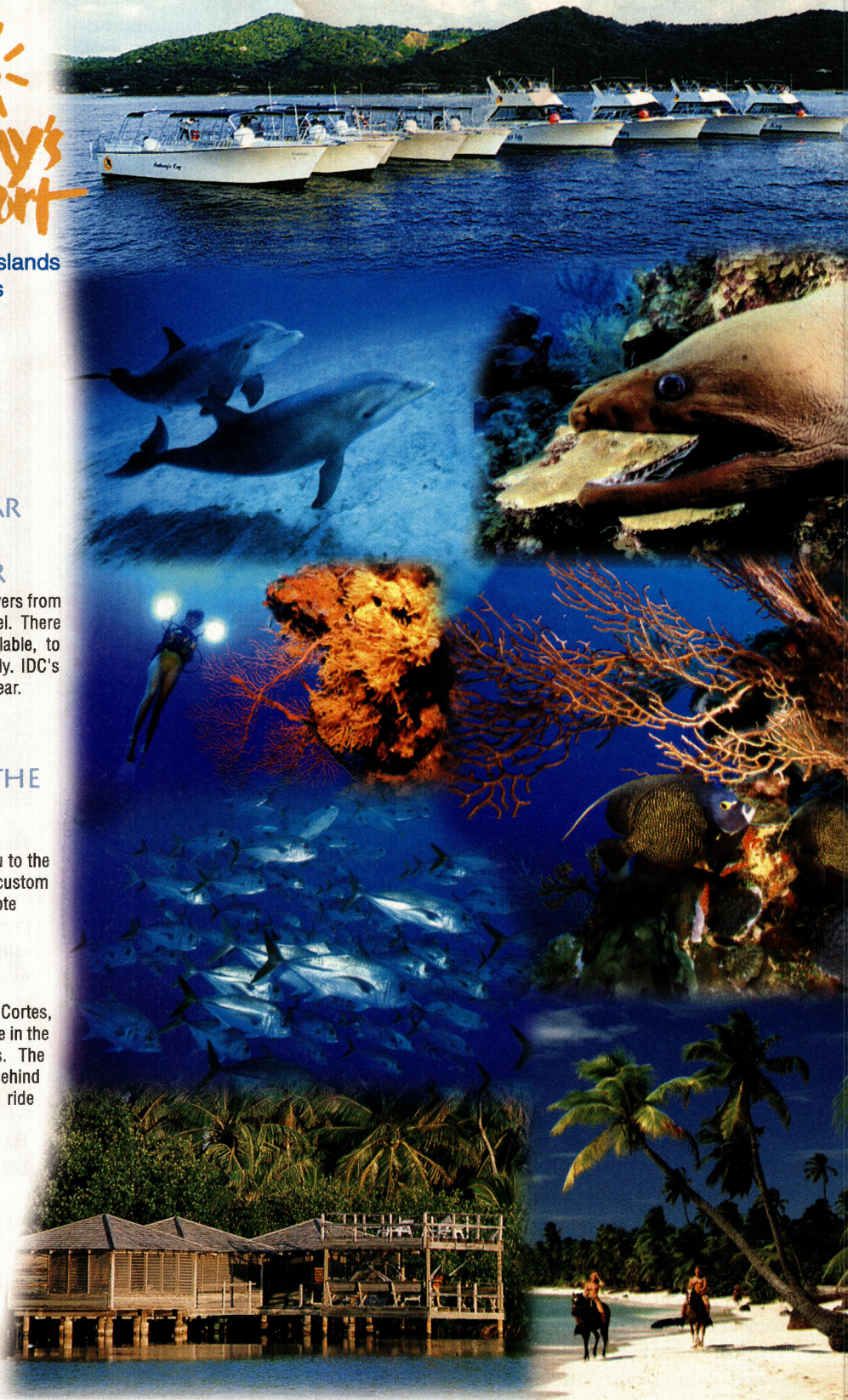
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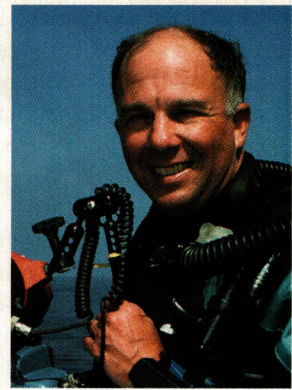
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Creating a Lens Package for an SLR System

BY MARTY SNYDERMAN



I am going to put my Nikon F5 camera into a housing, but I am not sure what lenses I should get. Can you advise? —Joe S., Tampa, FL



For this wide-angle shot of a diver and seafan (above), using a 24 mm or a 20 mm lens is effective. Lenses such as 105 mm and 60 mm are excellent for macro shots, like this one of feeding coral polyps (right).



TRADITIONAL THINKING SUGGESTS THAT JOE DOUBLES the focal length of his lenses as he puts his camera system together. Hypothetically, this means that if he starts with a 50 mm lens, the next lens he acquires should either be a 25 mm lens or a 100 mm lens. Once he has both of those lenses, he would want to try a 12.5 mm lens and a 200 mm lens.

Of course this plan is just a generalized guideline. The lenses made by various manufacturers don't always exactly double or halve in focal length. For example, Nikon makes 14 mm, 18 mm, 20 mm, 24 mm, 28 mm, 35 mm, 60 mm, 105 mm and 200 mm prime lenses, so there is no perfect, all-encompassing doubling path. But coming close to doubling or halving focal length has a lot to do with flexibility of lens selection and the sizes of subjects that can be photographed well.

Getting started with a lens that is well-suited for photographing subjects the size of lobsters and typical reef fish means buying a lens with a focal length of roughly 50 mm to 60 mm. The exact focal length in this range depends upon what choices are offered by the manufacturer of a specific camera. For Joe's Nikon, a 60 mm, f/2.8 macro lens with auto-focus capability is an excellent choice. This lens is ideal for filling a frame with subjects that range in size from just over an inch long to that of a typical squirreelfish.

Once Joe becomes comfortable using a 60 mm lens, he might want to consider trying a lens with a slightly longer focal length, such as a 105 mm lens, in order to work with small, skittish subjects like gobies and jawfish. In theory, it is possible to get great shots of these subjects with a 60 mm lens, but in real life trying to do so often

proves to be an exercise in frustration. A 105 mm lens will enable Joe to fill his frame with a three- or four-inch-long goby from farther away than he can with a 60 mm lens.

Perhaps Joe would prefer to try shooting larger, wide-angle subjects like seascapes or animals the size of Blue Sharks and sea lions. In that case, either a 24 mm lens or a 20 mm lens is a good place to start. Both of these lenses will require a diopter to optimize their optical performance behind most dome ports.

Joe should consider going with 60 mm lens for macro work and a 20 mm with the suggested diopter, or 24 mm lens with a diopter for his wide-angle work if he is limited by a budget. But if he can afford it, I think Joe should consider a Nikon 70 mm to 180 mm macro zoom for his close-up work (though he won't be able to reproduce at a 1:1 ratio over the full range of the lens), a Nikon 24 mm to 50 mm for medium format, and a 17 mm to 35 mm zoom for



wide-angle. And, Joe should check with his housing manufacturer before buying zoom lenses to be sure the ports and gears necessary are available. 🐟



Different lenses capture different perspectives of this Nassau Grouper.

Getting Started: Choosing Your Film

FILM COMES IN ALL DIFFERENT TYPES. HERE are some things that you will want to know before buying film.

Film comes in different sizes. The larger the size of an individual frame in the roll of film (not the number of exposures on a roll), the more information the film can capture. More information translates into more detail and a better rendition of the recorded subject in your shot.

The size of the film you will need is totally dependent upon your camera. Most underwater photographers use 35 mm film, depending on the camera. But some cameras are known as 110s or another format and require different print and slide films.

Film offers different numbers of exposures. With some films you can buy 12, 24 or 36 exposure rolls. I recommend 24 or 36 exposure rolls for underwater work. If you find a good subject, it is easy to take that many exposures on a single dive, and it is too easy to run out of film when the action gets hot.

Print film versus slide film. Both types have their use in the underwater world, and either type will fit into a camera of corresponding size. In other words, you can shoot both prints and slides with the same camera, just not on the same roll of film, unless you buy specialty films that allow that.

Deciding what you plan to use your underwater images for will determine whether or not you should use slide or print film.

Consider the speed of the film you select. Film speed, or ISO (Industrial Standards Organization), is a number that indicates the relative sensitivity a given film has to light. For example, a film that has an ISO of 200 is twice as sensitive to light as an ISO 100 speed film. This means that you need twice as much light to expose a frame of 100 ISO film as you will a frame of 200 ISO film. Fast films will not "cut through" limited visibility. If you can't see something with your eyes underwater, your film has no chance to record it either, despite an often repeated myth to the contrary. As a rule, there is plenty of light to work with during the day in the underwater world as long as you are diving within sport diving limits in reasonably good water conditions. Thus, relatively slow speed films with an ISO close to 100 tend to work just fine.

The advantage of slower films is that they have finer grain structure and render truer, prettier colors. So the slower the film speed you can get away with, the more audience appeal your pictures are likely to have.

Why isn't there just one kind of ISO 100 film? Different manufacturers make their own films, and each film has its own color bias. Photograph the exact same subject in the exact same way with two different makes of film, and the images will look slightly different. There is no right or wrong, only different.

Snyderman Snippet:

If you are using a point-and-shoot camera with a small strobe and you are shooting slides, try Provia 100F or Ektachrome 100VS. If your wide-angle shots are too dark, then try a 400 ISO film. If you want to shoot prints, try Kodak Royal Gold 100, or if you find you need a faster film, try Kodak Royal Gold 200, 400 or Kodak Max 400 film.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY?

Take an online course at Marty Snyderman's School of Underwater Photography at www.skin-diver.com. This comprehensive course consists of nine interactive classes taken at your convenience.

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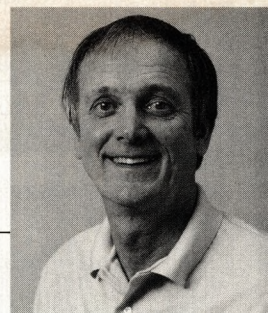
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The *Titanic*

BY ELLSWORTH BOYD



CRIS KOHL OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, HAS written another fascinating shipwreck book, *Titanic: The Great Lakes Connections*. Fans of the doomed White Star Liner, *Titanic*, might be surprised to learn of its close ties to the lakes.

The April 1912 maiden voyage of the *Titanic* booked 1,343 passengers,

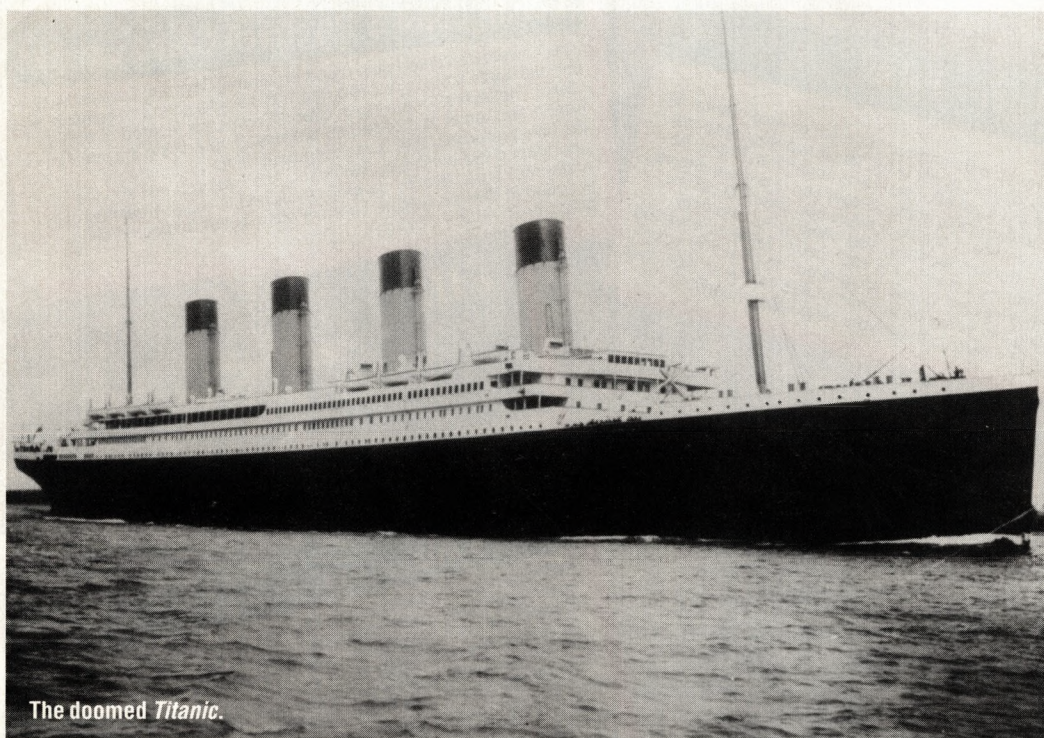
steamers in the Great Lakes. Repercussions from the *Titanic*'s misfortune were inevitable as passenger bookings on this line declined for several seasons.

Sinkings of other vessels were also compared to the *Titanic*, such as the *Eastland* mishap, an excursion ship that capsized at its dock on the Chica-

go River in 1915. Repercussions from the *Titanic*'s misfortune were inevitable as passenger bookings on this line declined for several seasons.

MAGGIE WDOWIAK, VIA THE INTERNET, asks if there are any laws pertaining to the recovery of artifacts from shipwrecks in waters off New Jersey and New York.

Maritime attorney Peter Hess of Wilmington, DE, says: "Ironically, more than a dozen years after the passage of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act, which declares that all abandoned wrecks in state waters are the property of that state, New Jersey has yet to enact any legislation governing its shipwrecks. Although there are a couple of references to shipwrecks and their habitat value to marine life in the New Jersey Revised Statutes, there is no law prohibiting the



The doomed *Titanic*.

345 of them ultimately bound for Great Lake cities in eight states and Canada. Only 128 of them survived. Loved ones sought the latest reports on the tragedy, but discovered later that writers from Detroit, MI, Dayton, OH, Milwaukee, WI, and other newspapers reported many inaccuracies.

While Britain's White Star Line built immense ships for trans-Atlantic service, a totally unrelated White Star Line operated excursion

ships around the lakes without wireless communications installed them promptly. Shortly thereafter, the public—including those who lived around the Great Lakes—screamed

for maritime review and reform based on regular ship inspections to ensure passenger safety.

salvage of artifacts from wrecks other than those named to the National or State Register of Historic Places or located in a state park or similar locale."

Hess cites Jack Fullmer of the New Jersey Council of Diving clubs as the authority on New Jersey state legislation, a subject that has been bantered about for years, but never resolved. Hess says that New York has taken a more active approach in the management of its historic shipwrecks. Wrecks such as the *Batteau*

and *Rideau*, wooden troop and supply carriers sunk in Lake George in the French and Indian War, and the HMS *Culloden*, sunk off eastern Long Island, are examples of protected sites where artifact recovery is prohibited.

DON ACHESON, VIA THE INTERNET, writes: "I have a minor supplement to your comments in February's Wreck Facts about the age-old practice of placing coins beneath the mast of a new ship when it is "stepped." I found that this is still practiced on various ships in the Litton Yards, Pascagoula, Mississippi." Don has a copy of a special coin that was minted to be placed beneath the mast of the USS *Roosevelt*, sister ship to the USS *Cole*, attacked last year by terrorists in the Yemeni port of Aden.

BRYAN NICHOLS, VIA THE INTERNET, is a kayak guide on Glover's Atoll, Belize, Central America. While snorkeling on his day off, he came across a large, coral encrusted anchor in shallow water and wants to know what ship it might have come from.

Shipwrecks in the Americas, by Robert Marx, lists four English merchantmen and one Scottish ship lost in that area between 1751 and 1807. Bryan will have to search the area when he's not out kayaking and see if he can find a scatter trail that might indicate a wreck nearby. Some good photos of the anchor might help a marine historian determine the origin of the ship.

RUSSELL FRYE OF NEWPORT, NEW JERSEY, is seeking information on wrecks in Delaware Bay.

I'm sending Russell the addresses of members of the Delaware Underwater Swim Club who have explored many of these wrecks. The club, one of the oldest in the U.S., was formed in 1954. I also recommend two books: *Shipwrecks of Delaware and Maryland*, by Gary Gentile, and *Notebook of Shipwrecks: Maryland and Delaware Coasts*, by Dick Moale.

WEST VIRGINIAN CHRIS MILAN, via the Internet, wants to know what be-

came of World War II's USS *West Virginia*, one of the heroic battleships that participated in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, October 1944.

According to Norman Carey, Curator, U.S. Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC, the *West Virginia* was decommissioned in 1947 and scrapped in 1959, along with the USS *Tennessee*, *California*, *Maryland* and *Colorado*. Although the Navy couldn't save them all, the USS *North Carolina* and *Alabama* managed to escape the scrap pile and were declared historic

vessels. In addition to the Leyte Gulf (Phillipines), the *West Virginia* saw action off Iwo Jima and Okinawa and was in Tokyo Bay for the September 1, 1945, formal surrender of the Japanese. She earned five battle stars during the war.

Send your wreck questions to Ellsworth Boyd, 1120 Beroud Rd., White Hall, MD, 21161. Be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a personal reply. Or e-mail him at: aced@gateway.net.

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SKIN DIVER AUGUST 2001 29

gear and gadgets

by Daryl Carson & Ryan Allen

OCEANHAUS PC5 VIDEO CAMERA HOUSING



O my little fail I didn't buy it until I saw it. The Oceanhaus PC5 video housing for the Sony PC5 digital video camera is so tiny it can be hefted in the palm of your hand. It's as if the designers dipped the camera in liquid aluminum, pulled it out and then shaved everything that wasn't necessary. There is no extra weight. The camera, housing and two batteries weigh in at a scant two and a half pounds. It can be carried in a BC pocket or mounted on a tripod. The camera can be operated with one hand. It's a point-and-shoot camera with the sophistication of a point-and-shoot camera. The PC5 has digital video and still cameras. The PC5 has zoom, auto-focus, stills controls for power, lens zooms to 100 degrees, lighting and wide-angle. Brothers and sisters, even a flat port available. ABSea Photo: (310) 644-XXXX here. bsea.net.

PARKWAY SCUBA FOG CUTTER KNIFE

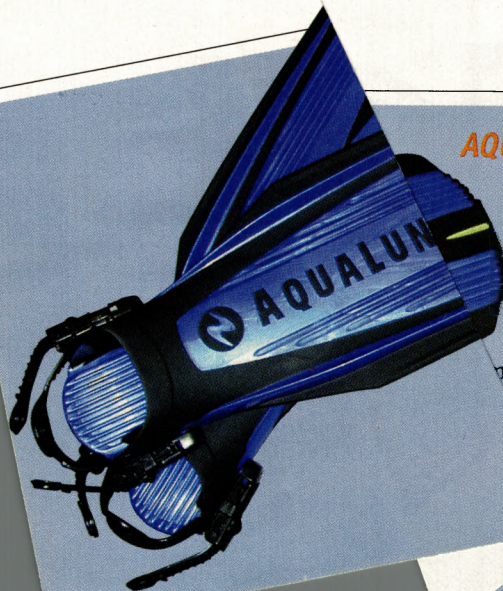
Indecision is an awful thing. Should you dive with a knife or scissors? Or maybe you should get one of those orange line blades? Well, fret not dear diver, because Parkway's Fog Cutter Knife packs all the cutting power you need into one precision punch. When closed, it is a formidable six inches of 440 stainless steel with a drop-point tip, long razor edge and ripping serrated back bone. Release the catch at the butt of the handle, and it opens into a nimble pair of scissors ready to slice through monofilament, kelp or whatever entangles your path. (All you have to do is decide which path to take.) And it comes packaged in a rugged sheath complete with adjustable straps and quick-release buckles. Parkway Scuba: (800) 587-2822 or www.parkwayscuba.com.



AQUA LUNG BLADES II

An updated version of a classic fin, the Aqua Lung Blades II will no doubt strike a chord with many faithful wearers of the original. The new fin retains the basic look and functionality divers have come to associate with "the Blades," but incorporates a few changes for the new millennium. Crafted from a combination of a polymer plastic (for stability) and rubber (for flexibility), these fins offer modern performance and a few new stylistic curves. The new adjustable buckles are better than ever, and long vertical fins for maximum thrust. Available in blue, neon yellow, black

or www.aqualung.com.



SPARE AIR DELUXE HOLSTER

The Spare Air Deluxe Holster keeps your Spare Air secure in any location. With two adjustable quick-release straps, the holster can be attached virtually anywhere—on the shoulder, on the leg, on the tank strap or even upside-down. The Deluxe Holster fits both the current 3.0 cubic foot model and earlier 2.7 cubic foot Spare Air models.

Spare Air: (800) 648-3483 or www.spareair.com.

AQUACOLOR MASK

Aquacolor masks are designed to bring out the true colors of fish and coral lost in the big blue. Based on the theory that the human brain uses the best information from each eye to compile the image we see, Aquacolor masks have two different colored lenses, each one designed to enhance a different aspect of what the eyes take in. I recently had the opportunity to dive with an Aquacolor mask in Bonaire and found the results to be astounding. Down to about 60 feet, where there was still plenty of

sunlight, colors were exceptionally intense and true. And skin tones looked natural. I also found that the lenses created a greater contrast between colors, which made everything appear sharper, almost three-dimensional. And if that's not enough, Aquacolor masks claim to be "fogless forever." I tried all week to fog up my mask. And it never happened.

—Jenn Miller

Aquacolor: (800) 298-0160 or www.aquacolor.com.



SCUBAPRO LADYHAWK BC AND PACIFIC STEAMER WETSUIT

Specifically designed to meet the comfort and performance needs of female divers, the SCUBAPRO LadyHawk BC employs a backpack style harness tailored for the female torso. The back-mounted aircell provides 34 pounds of lift, is progressively shaped and nearly flat when deflated. Aircell expanders allow the cell to inflate without squeezing the diver. The weight-integrated design accommodates 10 pounds in two forward quick-release pouches and five pounds in two rear pouches for better trim. The weight pouches are independent of cargo pockets, and an additional pull-down accessory pocket provides ample carrying capacity. The BC is available with either an Air 2 or balanced power inflator.

SCUBAPRO's Pacific Steamer (3 mm) has a soft plush lining, back zipper and compression-molded kneepads. Designed to be very flexible, it is easy to don and doff. Rolled edge seals at the wrists and ankles keep water transfer to a minimum.

SCUBAPRO: (800) SCUBA PRO or www.scubapro.com.



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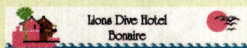
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diveclubnews

edited by **Ryan Allen**

FOR HAMMERHEADS, NOTHING IS INSURMOUNTABLE

THE BENTON HAMMERHEADS AND THE Arkansas Disabled Scuba Association (ADSA) have teamed up to educate potential divers with disabilities about the benefits of adaptive scuba diving. For the second year in a row, they



will join the Spa Area Independent Living Services (SAILS—a service provider aimed at getting individuals with disabilities back into the mainstream), in welcoming divers to join them this September at Lake DeGray, AK, for a chance to live the dream of underwater exploration. This annual event will include a variety of water activities, including scuba diving, which was introduced just last year.

For more information on the event, contact Alan Dillard at (501) 315-7900, or learn more about the Hammerheads at www.h-heads.com.

SCUBA RANGERS OPENS WORLD OF DIVING TO KIDS

SCUBA RANGERS IS A CLUB DESIGNED especially for kids (8 to 12 years old) that want to learn to scuba dive. Kids work their way through five Ranger



Photo/Courtesy Scuba Rangers

levels—receiving cool awards for each level—on their way to becoming a full-fledged Scuba Ranger.

To find a Scuba Rangers Club near you, call (970) 221-2813 or visit www.scubarangers.com.

Editors note: The correct website for the New England Cold Water Divers is <http://home.ici.net/~hoaglj/necwd>.

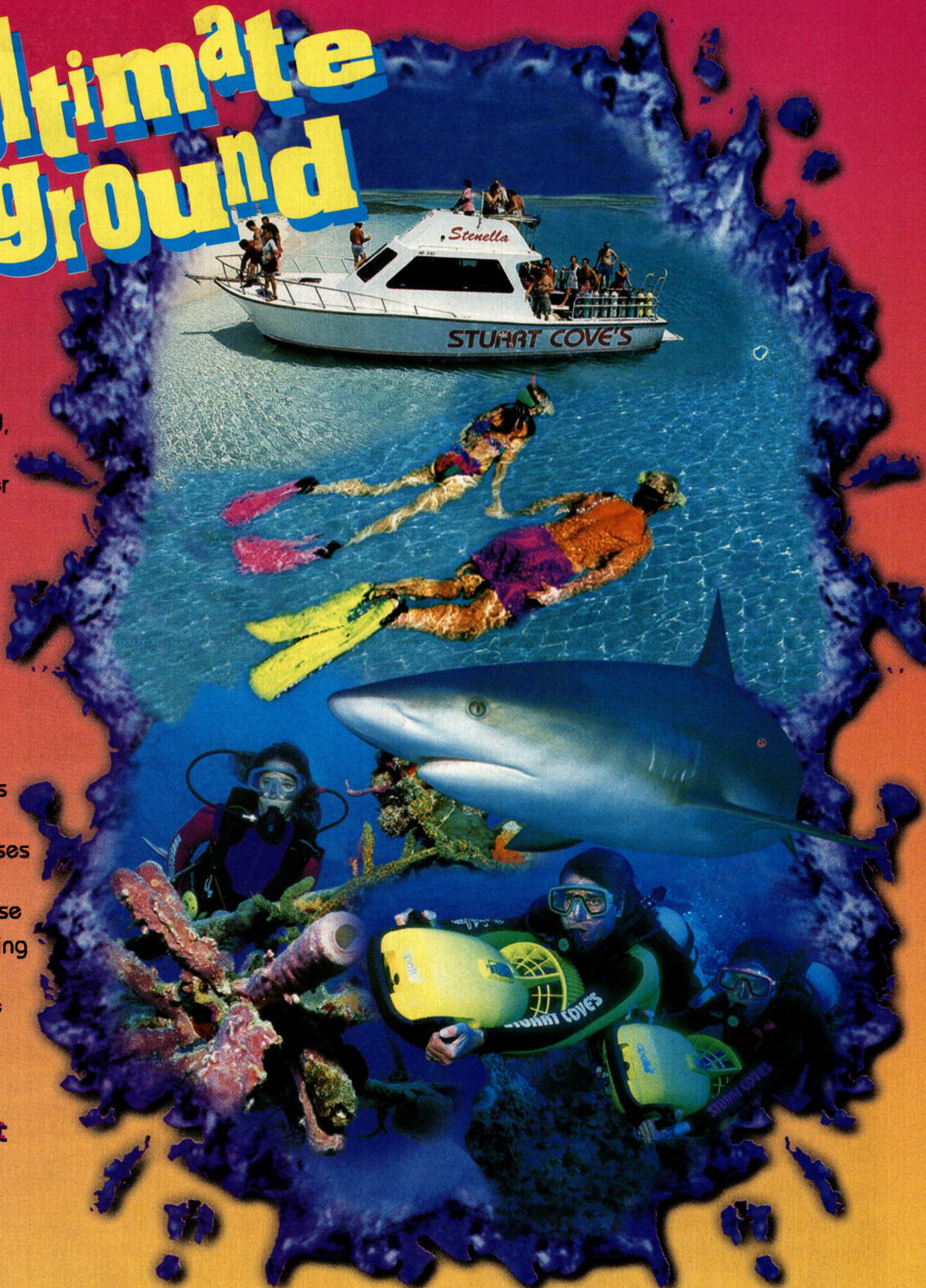
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allenr@emapusa.com.



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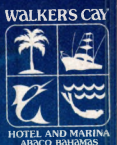
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Advanced U/W Camera Systems

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Simple point-and-shoot cameras are affordable, easy to use and produce great snapshots. But for the underwater photographer who wants to capture professional quality images, a substantial equipment investment is mandatory. If that's you, chances are you've seen divers with a host of different systems, some in housings, some with strobes, multiple lenses, synch cords, dome ports...the list goes on. Matching a camera system with your photo needs and your bank account is the first step. The second is easy: get in the water and shoot.

■ AMPHIBIOUS CAMERAS

Amphibious cameras are much like topside rangefinder cameras that have been sealed to go underwater. One of the primary advantages of amphibious cameras is compactness. Their relatively small size makes them easy to carry and maneuver in fast-paced shooting situations, like capturing big animals on the move. Amphibious systems are versatile too, being used for everything from wide-angle to macro photography. Macro setups require the use of a framer, so are best suited for stationary subjects.



want to concentrate on capturing wide-angle or macro images and want a compact camera, then an amphibious camera might be the ticket. If you have already made a considerable investment in a land camera and want to take it underwater, then a housing is likely the best choice.

Check out all the extra features offered to see if they match your requirements. And ask yourself the following questions: Which controls do you use the most? Does the housing have ports and controls for the lenses in your camera bag? Is the system compatible with the underwater strobes you will be using? Will it accept auxiliary strobe arms?

If you decide to purchase a new camera housing, we strongly recommend that you pool test an empty housing. We also suggest running the same test at about 60 feet. Carefully examine the housing for any leaks or escaping bubbles. From then on, good maintenance and a watchful eye should keep you out of trouble.



Find the right camera system, and the rewards will speak for themselves. The following is a rundown on the offerings from some of the more popular manufacturers.

■ HOUSED CAMERAS

The advantage of using housed, single lens reflex (SLR) cameras is they allow the photographer to take advantage of advanced features like autofocus, autoexposure, auto-bracketing, and they use a wide selection of lenses. With a short telephoto macro lens, you can capture fish on film from a safe distance, or use the motor drive to capture the high-speed action of a porpoise.

The disadvantage of underwater housings are their bulk and the drag they create when swimming. Housings also require additional maintenance, but modern designs are well-built and most even have moisture detectors to indicate any leakage problems.

■ THE DETAILS

So, which underwater system is right for you? Will it be an amphibious camera or an SLR in a housing? If you

1 aquatica

This popular housing manufacturer concentrates mainly on the Nikon line of high-end SLR cameras. At present, Aquatica makes housings for the Nikon F5, F100, N90 series, N70 series, N60 Series, 8008 series, F3 and Nikon F. In addition, it has housings for the Canon F, Pentax LX and the Mamiya RZ-67 medium format camera. The housings are cast aluminum, which includes the body, backplate and a wide assortment of lens ports. Depth-rated to over 300 feet, their ergonomic designs provide access to all the important camera features.

Contact: (514) 737-9481, www.aquatica.ca



2 igloo

The Igloo housing for the Nikon F100 camera is produced from a solid piece of aluminum that is machined and anodized. The housing has a hinge at the top and a unique helical locking clamp for positive closure. All of the important camera controls can be easily operated with the right hand. The optical viewfinder extends out from the back of the housing, allowing room for a regulator and still providing full frame viewing. Two TTL sync ports are available for electronic flash, and there are more than half a dozen ports for wide-angle to long-macro. The Igloo is depth-rated to 300 feet.

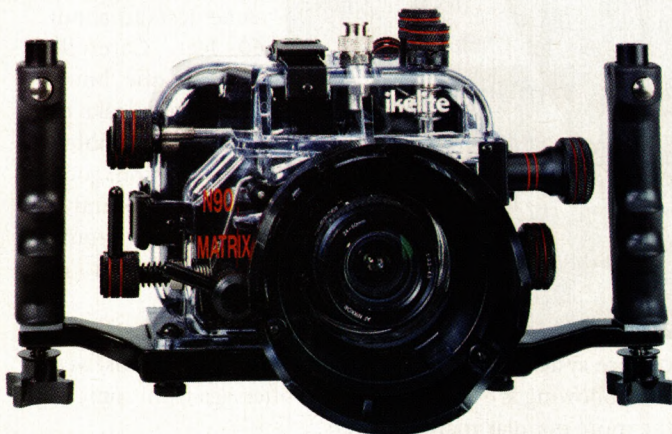
Contact: (858) 481-0604, www.marinecamera.com



3 ikelite

Ikelite housings have been dependable performers for more than 25 years. Made of injection molded clear polycarbonate, all the camera controls are readily visible to the diver. Ikelite offers variations for over 40 different SLR camera bodies and 50 different lenses from Canon, Minolta, Nikon and Pentax. Each housing has a full range of camera controls at the diver's fingertips, an enhanced camera eyepiece for easy viewing and a working depth of 200 feet. In addition, Ikelite has created a wide assortment of adapters for lenses, flash connectors, handles and triggers.

Contact: (317) 923-4523, www.ikelite.com



4 nexus

Nexus housings are sand cast aluminum and provide a compact fit for either the Nikon F4 or N90 cameras. The Master N90 housing can also be converted to accommodate the Nikon 8008s, 6006 and N50 camera bodies. Both housings feature a wide variety of camera controls and twin TTL sync ports. The Nexus housings feature an extensive line of ports to accommodate most any lens configuration. The Nexus F4 Pro housing also features an optional action finder to aid image composition.

Contact: (214) 368-3555, www.nexusamerica.com

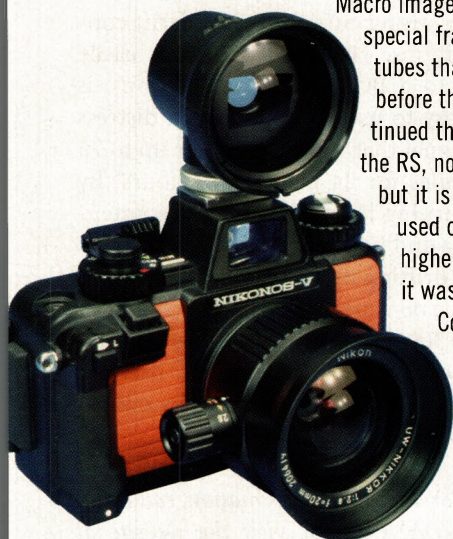


5 nikon

The current Nikonos V model is made of die cast copper silicon oxidized aluminum alloy, and all joints are sealed by O-ring gaskets for watertightness. This rangefinder camera accommodates five dedicated Nikon U/W lenses from wide-angle to telephoto and has a depth rating of 160 feet. Its 15 mm lens is considered one of the finest underwater wide-angle lenses made.

Macro images are possible with special framers and extension tubes that can be attached before the dive. Nikon discontinued their SLR camera (called the RS, not pictured) in 1996, but it is still so popular that a used one often draws a higher price tag than when it was in production.

Contact: (800) 645-6687, www.nikonusa.com



6 sea & sea

Sea & Sea offers both amphibious and housed advanced level cameras. They make housings for the Nikon F5, F100, the new F80 and Canon Rebel 2000 camera bodies. The housings are made of a lightweight, non-corrodible aluminum alloy and are ergonomically configured for easy camera control. All models feature dual bulkhead connectors, large optical viewfinder and a wide selection of quick coupling bayonet ports. Depth ratings range between 200 and 250 feet.

The amphibious Motor Marine II-EX (not pictured) is constructed of non-corrodible polycarbonate with a depth rating of 150 feet. It features four shutter speeds, TTL, built-in close-up lens and four auxiliary lenses (2 wide-angle, 2 macro) that can be changed underwater.

Contact: (760) 929-1909, www.seaandsea.com



7 sea cam

Attention to detail is the hallmark of the precision-cast SeaCam aluminum housings. They are available for Nikon F5, F100, N90, N70, N50 and the Canon EOS 5, EOS 1n and EOS 1n hs/rs camera systems. Double O-ring seals are used around each camera control shaft, and an optional 45-degree swivel sportsfinder allows for flexibility in the viewing angle. Lens ports range from super wide to telephoto macro, and extension tube ports offer even longer configurations. The depth rating on the SeaCam is 240 feet.

Contact: (714) 848-6919, www.seacamsys.com



8 subal

Subal's extensive line of marine grade aluminum anodized housings accommodate the gamut of Nikon cameras including the Nikon F5, F4, F100, N90 and 8008 bodies. The housings are rated to 210 feet and feature ergonomic placement of camera controls to allow for easy, one hand operation. They offer a bayonet mounting system for a comprehensive selection of ports that include full frame fisheye to 1:1 macro. Subal housings also incorporate snap-on lens gears that eliminate the hassle of special installation tools and reduce lens wear and tear. In addition, Subal makes a housing for the Canon Elan IIe camera that features Canon to Nikon strobe electronics and a depth rating of 180 feet.

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THREE OF PETER HUGHES DIVING vessels will soon feature the new ACR DiveRes-Q Mini B 300 Personal Diver Distress and Rescue Beacons for use by its diving guests. The inclusion of the new ACR beacons makes Peter Hughes Diving the first live-aboard operator to provide each diver with this beneficial equipment. Along with the Mini B 300, each diver will also carry the DiveRes-Q Light, which is a high-powered, bright, battery-operated marker light. According to Peter Hughes, "Safety has always been our top priority. Where the safety of our divers is concerned, we will stay on the cutting edge."

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Dancer in Papua New Guinea, *Sun Dancer II* in Palau and *Sky Dancer* in the Galapagos Islands, where diving is conducted from tenders, often in strong currents and in drift conditions. The Mini B 300 fits easily into a BC pocket (or clips on), is easy to use and transmits a distress signal that is detectable for up to 75 miles for 24 continuous hours. By turning it on, extending the antenna and holding it above the surface, a drifting diver can send a signal to the boat and wait for help. The Mini B 300 also transmits on the international distress frequencies used by all search and rescue organizations around the world. 🦋

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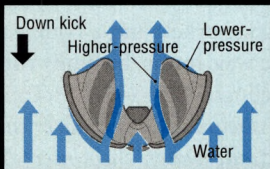


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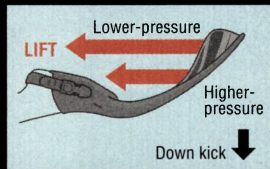
performance chart »

technical specs

Traditional fins only use repulsive force to create propulsion. This normally means that in order to create strong propulsion, maximum effort is required, resulting in muscle fatigue not only for beginners, women, and middle-aged divers, but professionals as well. Added to which, the body moves left and right in reaction to the kicking needed to move forward, thus reducing propulsion.



The SF-8 has a blade that is split down the middle, so it takes the shape shown in the diagram when kicked under water. This special blade shape creates propulsion (lift) by generating a pressure differential above and below the blade, in addition to the repulsive force created by kicking. The SF-8 is a fin that allows all divers to create propulsion using only a small bent-knee kick, with a light rhythm.



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Love, Scuba Style

"I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO PUKE," announced my diminutive sister Joanne. She was perched on the edge of a dingy in Julian Rocks Marine Reserve at Byron Bay, Australia. The water was like silk, so it wasn't seasickness. Her boyfriend, Iain, was concerned, but I

was grinning. The real reason she felt sick was the note I had stuck inside my wetsuit. She planned to give it to her boyfriend as soon as they went beneath the waves. It read: "Will you marry me?"

Four years ago, when he had made a more traditional proposal, she had



Photo/Dee McLaughlin

said, "Not yet." He said it would be her turn next.

Both are avid scuba divers, so she decided on an underwater encounter. After all, the poor lad would only be able to signal up, down or OK.

So there we all were on a beautiful day, watching the dolphins dance and the sun glint off a lighthouse. Everyone on the boat was looking forward to the dive. Iain was completely unaware of what was about to befall him. My sister was absolutely green. "I need to get into the water now!" she howled. And so we dove in. I floated by her with the camera, ready to document the moment.

"I was terrified that the ink had run on my sign," Joanne later told our mom. "Instead of saying 'Will you marry me?' it would say 'Wooly margarine' or 'Willy mental beans.'"

But when she slowly unrolled the note, it was completely legible. She pointed it at Iain. Slowly his hand extended and his forefinger touched his thumb in the universal OK. They hugged each other as passionately as they could with BCs, weightbelts, masks, snorkels and a couple of tanks in the way. It was the kinky rubber suit that clinched it. —Dee McLaughlin

Ever documented a bizarre and fabulous underwater encounter? Then we want to hear from you. E-mail careyt@emapusa.com or send it to Skin Diver Freeflow, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

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Photo Ethan Gordon

mo

Fluorescent anemone, 9:30 PM.
Right: Buddy Dive dock, 2:00 AM.
Below: Tarpon flashing out of the
darkness to feed on baitfish,
Town Pier, 10:30 PM.

Photos/Ty Sawyer



onlighting in Bonaire

by Ty Sawyer



My buddy Sean and I had been talking about coming to Bonaire to shun daylight and dive all night for a couple of years. It's one of the few places in the world where you can grab a tank and shore dive whenever and practically wherever you like, 24 hours a day. So we came, nary a bottle of sunscreen between us, and rose nightly, like bats, with the setting sun.

Like two thieves getting ready for a heist, we were parked in our rental van, in the dark, at the side of the road just south of the main city of Kralendijk. Corinna Wegerer, dive operations manager of Buddy Dive, apparently as insane as we were about night diving, had volunteered to rendezvous with us at this spot, at 4:45 AM, and take us on a sunrise dive on the wreck of the ex-drug runner, the *Hilma Hooker*.

Time plays tricks on you at this dim hour, and as my watch clicked over to 4:46 AM, I thought Corinna had done the only sensible thing to do this early in the morning—sleep in.

Somewhere off in the moonlit dis-

tance a wild donkey brayed, killing the silence. “Is she here?” asked Sean, dozing in the passenger seat.

“Not yet.” Four forty-seven my watch now blinked. It was weird diving all night and sleeping all day. After the fourth or fifth dive, when the waking sun was lightening the sea and sky to a pale gray, our bodies seemed to want to start the day, maybe hop on a boat and see some pretty fish. But as soon as we would lie down in our beds, we’d be instantly asleep. The only full sun we’d seen since our arrival was on TV, usually in a late-night movie so terrible it kept you awake because it was like watching a celluloid trainwreck.

Soon a set of headlights came stabbing and jerking their way through the darkness. With a conspiratorial flash of her lights, Corinna passed by and we followed her to a yellow painted rock marked “Hilma Hooker,” and turned off. We’d been shore diving for three nights, mostly on the shallow reef and sand flats just offshore of Buddy Dive. But this dive was a dark drop through 100 feet of open water, and now that Corinna was here, we were keyed up to see what awaited.

No one else was around as we got out, quickly donned gear and trundled to the water’s edge.

After a quick surface swim—with



The ubiquitous night encounter—a sleeping parrotfish, midnight.

Photo/Sean Anson

our fin kicks agitating the sea into a bioluminescent galaxy of lights that surrounded us like pixie dust—we descended into the pitch black of the ocean. Finally, the sharp orange of the *Tubastrea* encrusted hull of the wreck appeared through the gloom.

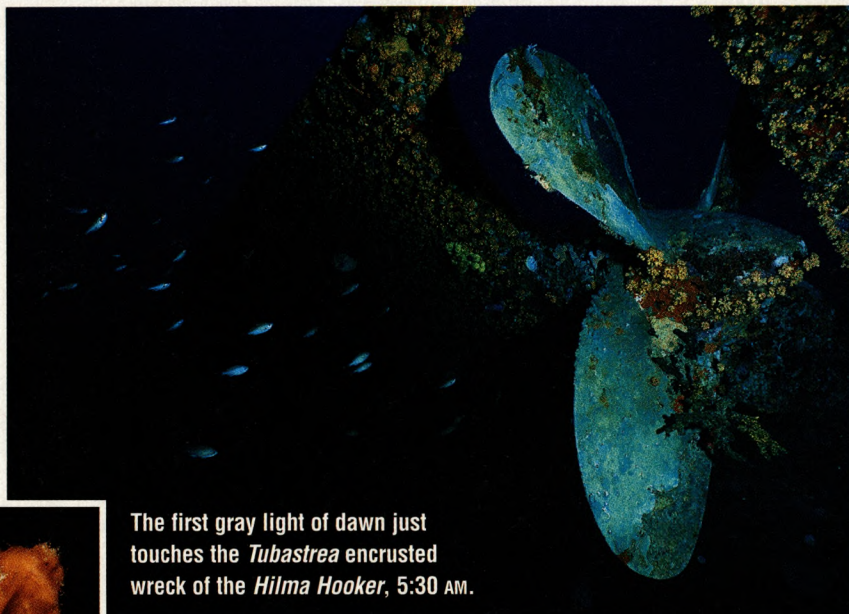
Resting on its starboard rail, with its crow's nest jutting off into the reflective, white sand bottom, the *Hooker* was an eerie sight of dancing shadows as our dive lights searched her holds and crevices. Three Tarpon flashed over the bow, their reflective scales ghostly against the black water. It was like exploring a haunted house. Behind every shadow lurked some creature disturbed by our intrusion, its cover blown by our lights. By the end of our bottom time the first gray fingers of morning light were filtering through the almost palpable dark of the ocean. As we worked our way up the wall abutting the wreck,

the transition between night and day literally erupted before our eyes. Sleeping creatures, such as parrotfish, would awaken as if an alarm sounded and immediately set to crunching on the coral for breakfast. Cleaning stations opened for business as we swam past. No stretch, no yawn, no scratching, no morning coffee.

By the time we'd worked our way back to shore the transition was complete, and a strange eye of fire hung in the sky above our heads. We immedi-

ately strapped on a fresh tank of nitrox and deigned to dive exposed by this odd daylight. Corinna was ecstatic. With a husband, three hooligans (her term) and a dive shop to run, she didn't get to dive often enough and welcomed another run at the wreck. Awaiting our return was a new world—a tropical, well-lighted scene that draws divers to Bonaire's reefs year after year, teeming with color and myriad fish such as Creole Wrasse, Gray Angelfish and masses of Brown Chromis. Like out-

was the rubble and sand just offshore from Buddy Dive, which at night seemed like the WWF—a free-for-all of survival. Here the night-cloaked gladiators come shaped like hermit crabs, squid, octopus, soapfish, predatory eels (Goldenchain, Viper, Moray and others), Peacock Flounder and Slipper Lobsters (which look like a fat lobster tail without a head), all of which sprout from the seemingly lifeless seascape. It looks as if life has come to the surface of the moon, and you can't help but won-



The first gray light of dawn just touches the *Tubastrea* encrusted wreck of the *Hilma Hooker*, 5:30 AM.

Photo/Ty Sawyer



Seahorses were everywhere—if you could find them!

Photo/Ethan Gordon

laws, the nocturnal predators had slunk back from the light and were nowhere to be seen.

Gladiators of the Sand

There are lessons to learn by diving all night. First, the reefs don't close down at night. Dark water dives are perhaps the most interesting and thrilling. A realm of

der how many divers pass over this arena during the day on their way to the reef.

A Wild West of Plunder Around midnight, on a dive in 15 feet of water, a six-inch-long, opaque, red-eyed fish, about as thick as a string came slithering and jerking into my light. It looked like a genetic experiment gone wrong. I watched it for about five minutes, trying to figure it out, before it zipped off

into the inky water.

On almost every dive we saw predatory eels score a night's meal; and we were accompanied on every dive by Snook or Tarpon looking to take advantage of Sean's

The Wee Creatures

Bonaire's reputation as a macro paradise is best appreciated at night, when all the wee things come out to eat and get eaten. Arrow Crabs, Flamingo Tongue Cowries, *Tubastrea*, gobies and anemone shrimp were so common we took little notice of them after a while.

wide-angle video lights.

We watched so much food chain in action during our night dives that it seemed no creature would survive until

daybreak. And, while our nightly excursions off the shore along the reef shared by Buddy Dive, Lion Dive, Captain Don's and Habitat Bonaire (as well as a couple excursions off Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn) were enthralling and remarkably different at all hours, it was our extended dive at the king of all night dives, Bonaire's

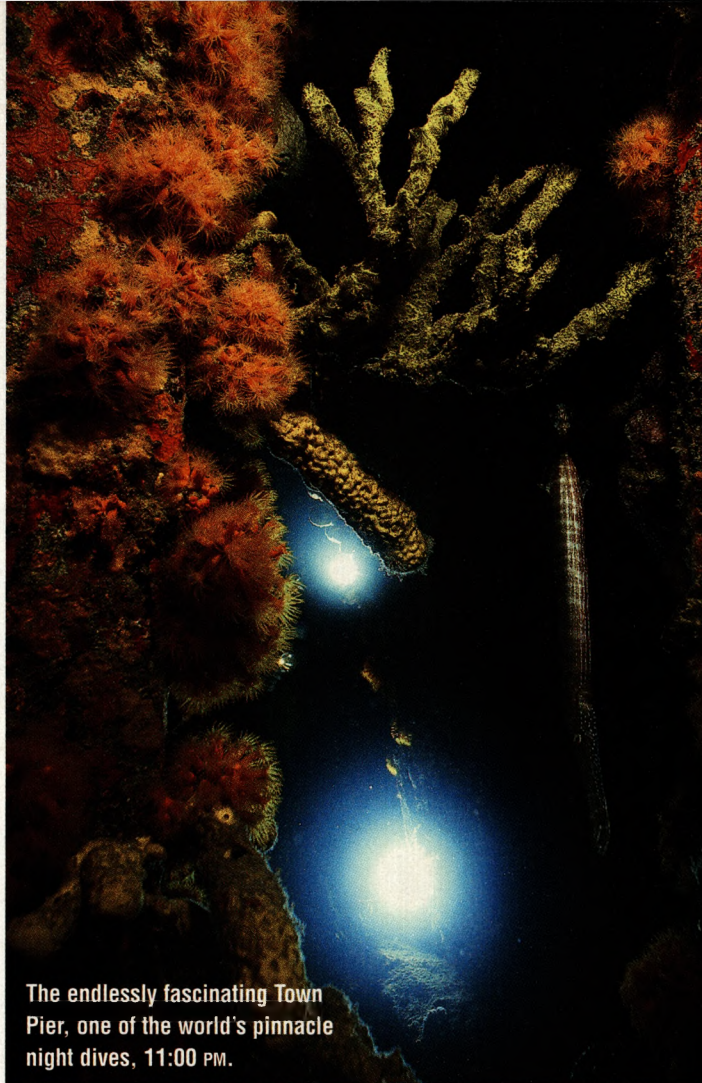
Night Moves

While diving all night may not fit into everyone's vacation plans, you should definitely schedule an early morning or dusk dive on Bonaire to check out the transition periods on the reef. At dawn the changeover is astounding, as reef fish seem to appear from empty blue water before your eyes (which may be preferable to disappearing, as they do at dusk). But for sheer otherworldliness, a 3:00 AM visit to see the nightly invasion of predators, will leave you stunned by all that you have missed by getting so much unnecessary sleep.

Town Pier, that could've made us permanently nocturnal bubble blowers. As we quickly found out, even the locals who dive it every week find its overgrown pilings endlessly fascinating. And for good reason. Everything from frogfish to juvenile Drums to hunting Tarpon congregate around the colorful sponge,

Tubastrea and coral-infested pilings under this working pier. Hagen Wegerer tag-teamed with his wife Corinna and led us through this maze of marine life pointing out things we'd passed by even in our slow, methodical approach. We even witnessed a fire worm getting eaten by a large hermit crab! I guess they like their food spicy.

Do You See That Sea Horse? Later, Hagen later took us over to Bonaventure off Klein Bonaire on a successful seahorse hunt among the healthy forests of gorgonians that crowd this site. Despite our best efforts at spotting these elusive creatures, it took the sharp eyes of Hagen to find them for us. (A couple of days later, feeling cocky, we jumped on a Plaza Resort Bonaire dive boat headed to the same site, thinking we'd hone right in on the bug-



The endlessly fascinating Town Pier, one of the world's pinnacle night dives, 11:00 PM.

Photo/Julie Morgan

Skin Diver GUIDE Bonaire

GETTING THERE: Bonaire is less than three hours from Miami via **ALM Airways**, (800) 327-7230, www.airalm.com, e-mail: reservations@airalm.net.

BONAIRE FACTS & TIPS: Bonaire is 50 miles off the coast of Venezuela. Most diving is shore-based (most sites marked with yellow-painted rocks at the side of the road—simply pull over and dive in, it's that easy), and the dive resorts are found along the sheltered leeward side of the island, most less than 20 minutes from Flamingo Airport. Bonaire is renowned for its macro creatures, crystal clear warm water and healthy reefs, but wide-angle opportunities such as the Hilma Hooker should not be overlooked. Many accommodations offer kitchenettes, and picturesque downtown Kralendijk has a supermarket, photo lab, pharmacy and both fast food and high-end restaurants. All the water on the island is desalinated and safe to drink. Electricity is 127/120 volts, 50 cycles. Bonaire's automobiles all have license plates that boast "Diver's Paradise," which from the number of divers and ease and quality of diving is apt. All divers must pay a \$10 marine park fee to dive, and a \$10 exit fee at the airport.

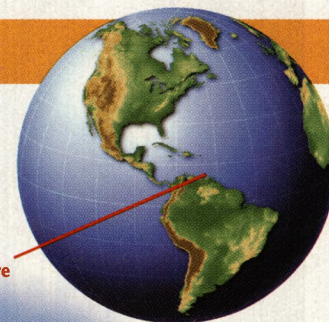
Best Time To Visit: Year-round. **Topside Climate:** Dry, desert-like island, 90+°F during the day, 80°F at night. **Water Temperature:** Avg: 80°F. **Exchange Rate:** \$1 USD = 2 Florin

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RESOURCES: **Bonaire Tourism Corporation**, (800) BONAIRE, www.infobonaire.com; **AquaQuest Books**, www.aquaquest.com; **Lonely Planet Books**, www.lonelyplanet.com; **Skin Diver Online**, www.skin-diver.com



Bonaire



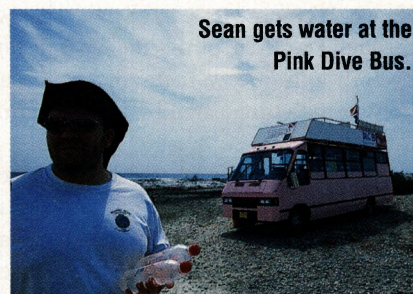


Though common on the night reef, this Lettuce Nudibranch is usually green in color.

Photo/Ethan Gordon

gers. Again, we were blanked without the help the Plaza's resident spotter, Jackson, who—dang him!—even found a seahorse in a gorgonian I'd just searched.)

Tarpon Buffet On our final dive, we gave a little back. Tarpon have learned to follow divers and take advantage of fish caught in their dive lights. It's a bit unnerving to have a five-foot Tarpon suddenly appear, inches from your face, from the 2:00 AM darkness behind you. If you ignore them, they will pass closer and closer—so close you can see your reflection in their mirrored scales—until you finally understand the game. So, pretty soon we were targeting hapless squirrelfish, Blackbar Soldierfish and even pufferfish to test the Tarpons' appetites. When they hone in on something



Sean gets water at the Pink Dive Bus.

Photo/Ty Sawyer

tasty, they ease in slowly, like they are on a nonchalant stroll over the reef, then strike in a flashing jolt of movement. But, the fish are crack escape artists, and elude the attack 9 times out of 10.

Daylight For our nondiving day we actually went out for a bit of the old topside stuff, during daylight, in a vain effort to right our internal clocks. Heading south, we passed by the Dutch-inspired architecture in the town of Kralendijk, then farther down

our dive schedule:

Monday—Two long dives, 9:00 PM and midnight, then we were pooped and hit the hay about 3:00 AM.

Tuesday—Late afternoon/dusk dive, dinner, 9:00 PM dive on the town pier, midnight dive, 3:00 AM dive.

Wednesday—4:00 PM dive, dinner, 9:00 PM dive off Klein Bonaire, 2:00 AM dive, 5:20 AM sunrise dive on the Hilma Hooker, which started at full dark and ended past sun up, 7:00 AM dive on the Hilma Hooker.

Thursday—Sunset/night dive off Klein Bonaire, dinner, 10:00 PM dive, 2:00 AM Tarpon-targeting dive.

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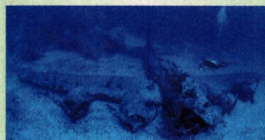
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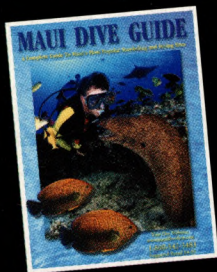
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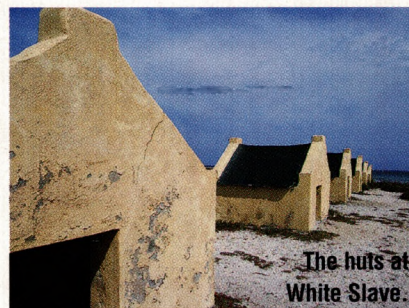


Gearing up for Town Pier dive, 7:00 PM.

the road visited the old slave huts known as Red and White Slave.

One thing about diving at night—it's cooler. On this afternoon the hot sun beat on our vampire-like paleness without mercy. We had to stop by the Pink Dive Bus (a kind of diver-specific roach coach/dive shop complete with gear rentals, food and O₂) for water and sun protection.

After applying sunscreen for the first time during our five-day trip, we rounded the southern tip of the island and drove up the windy east coast, past



The huts at
White Slave.

Photos/Ty Sawyer

the famous and photogenic Willemstoren Lighthouse, which seems to sprout from the middle of nowhere. But one look at the 10-foot breakers along the shore explains its isolation. That night we joined the 85 other divers staying at the resort for rum punch and tall tales. Then we went to bed at a decent hour, only to lie awake wondering what creatures were prowling the night water. 🐙

Special thanks to Buddy Dive and Corinna and Hagen Wegerer for leaving food at our door; Plaza Resort; and Pelican Products for helping us beat back the dark with their new Nemo dive light.

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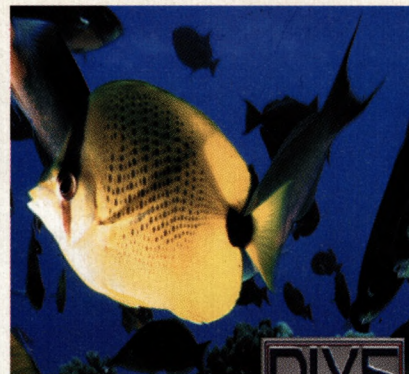
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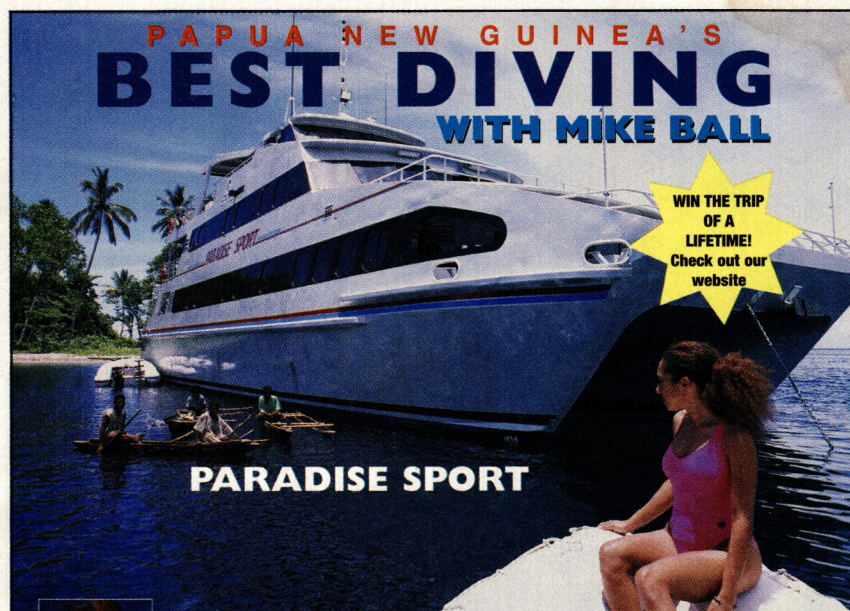
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diver's library

BY MICHELLE DANNER

Welcome to the Diver's Library, where each month we bring you the latest in diving media.

The Salvage of the Century, by Rich Wharton, Best Publishing Company, \$39.50, (800) 468-1055, www.bestpub.com

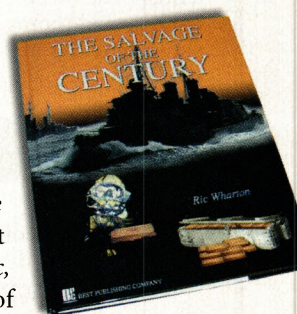
Do you remember how you felt when you first saw *Titanic*? You knew the ending (the boat sinks), but for some reason reliving the tale through film filled you with excitement.

Reading *The Salvage of the Century*, you feel the same anticipation as you become immersed in the history of the British cruiser, the *Edinburgh*. And even though you might get caught up in the illusionary hope that the battleship will survive the wartime sea, this book is about a sunken treasure, so she's going to sink.

The *Edinburgh* and five and a half tons of gold bullion sank May 2, 1942. Fifty-seven men died, 850 survived. It wasn't until 1981 that the author, Rich Wharton, headed a diving team to "unbury" this treasure, which lay 840 feet deep on the ocean's floor.

Wharton chronicles not only the history of the vessel, but also the diving technicalities involved with such a deep descent, as well as the dealings with the British government.

Did they recover the treasure? Don't forget the book is titled *The Salvage of the Century*, but like *Titanic*, the history of the vessel, both above and below the water, will keep you on edge until the very end.



For information on how to submit a product for review in Diver's Library, contact Michelle Danner at dannerm@emapusa.com.

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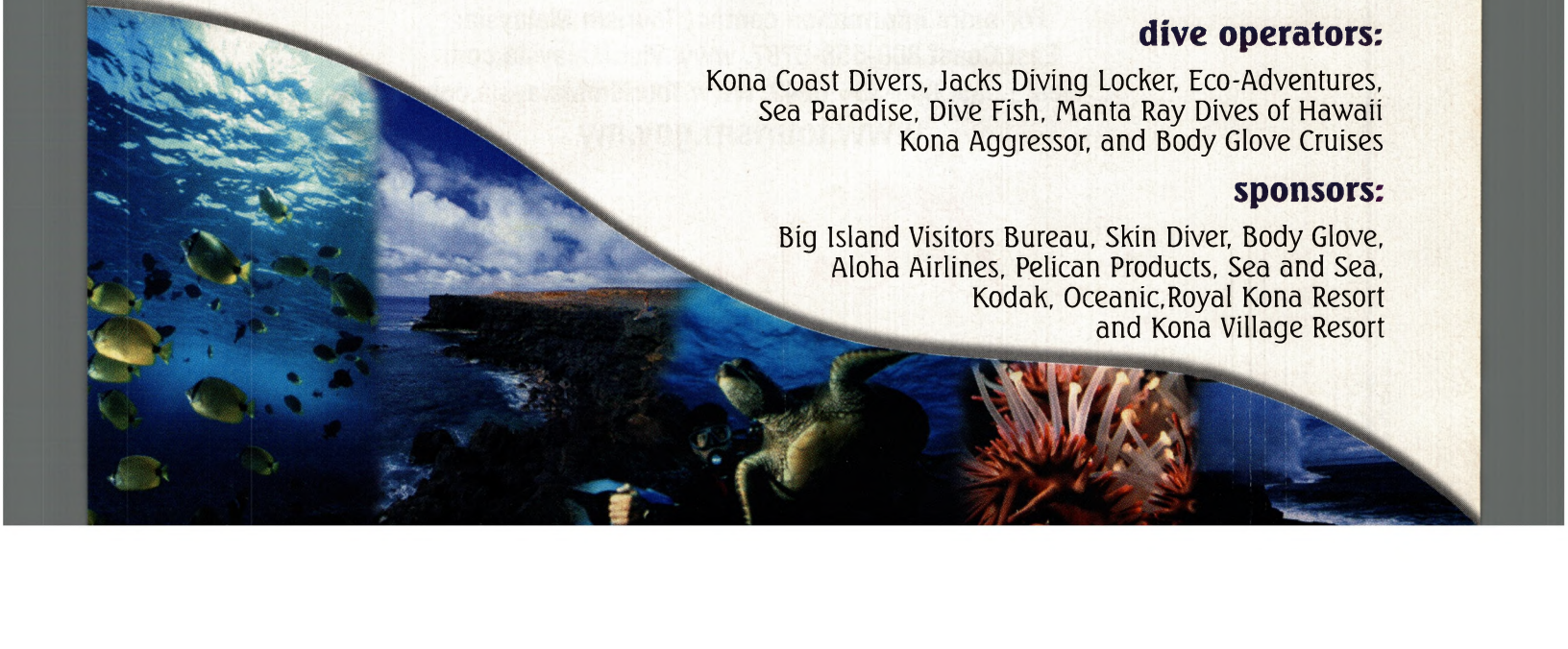
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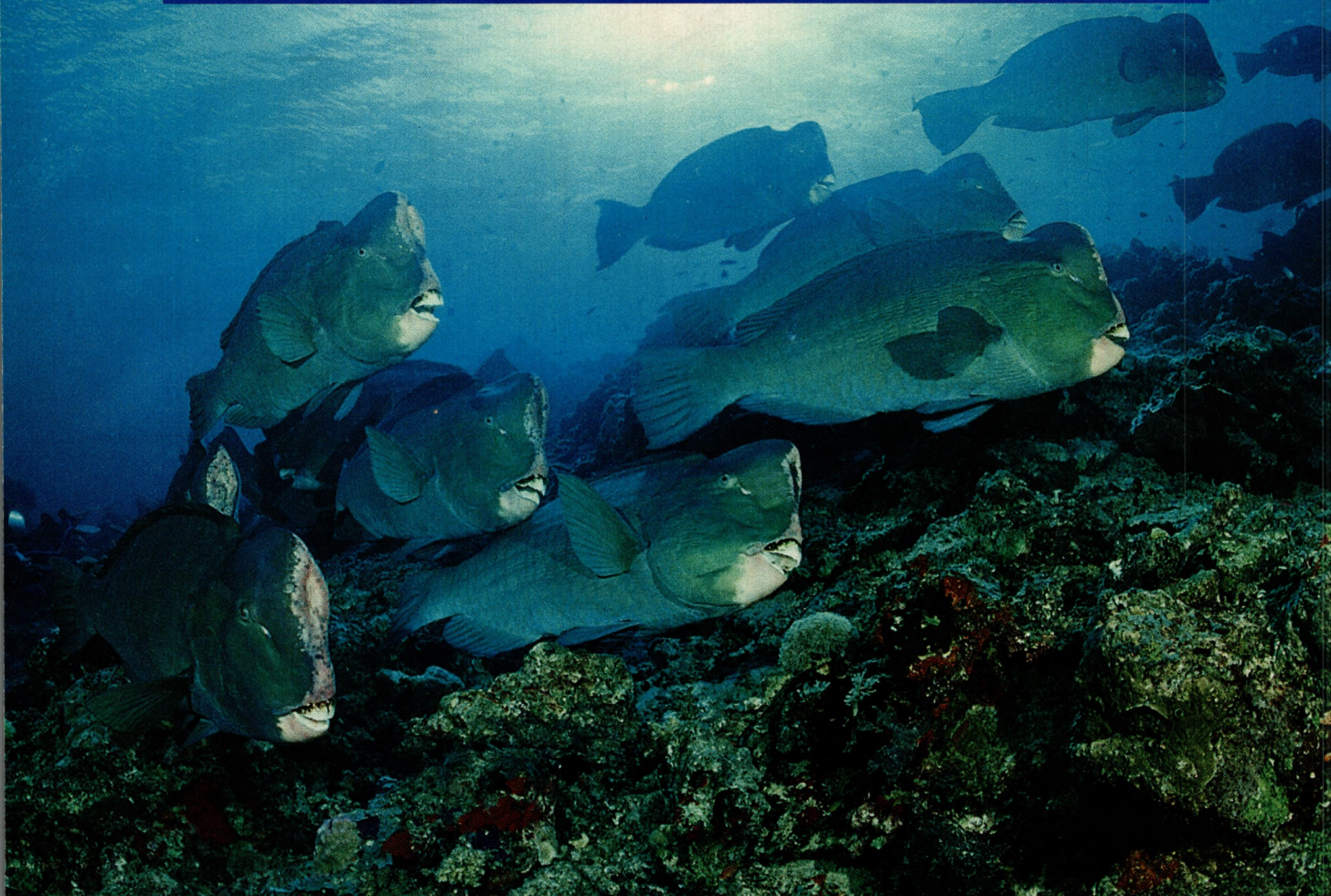
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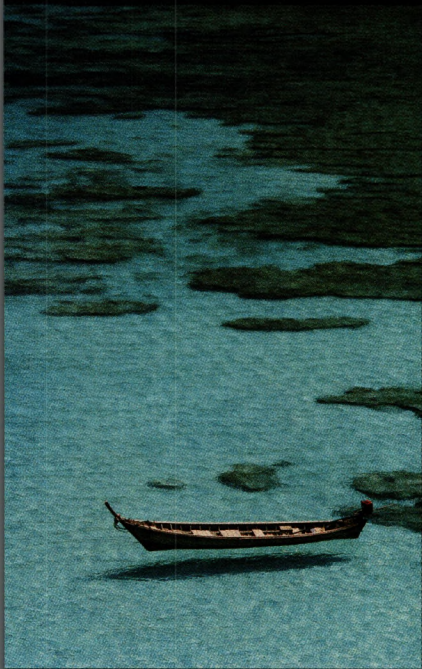
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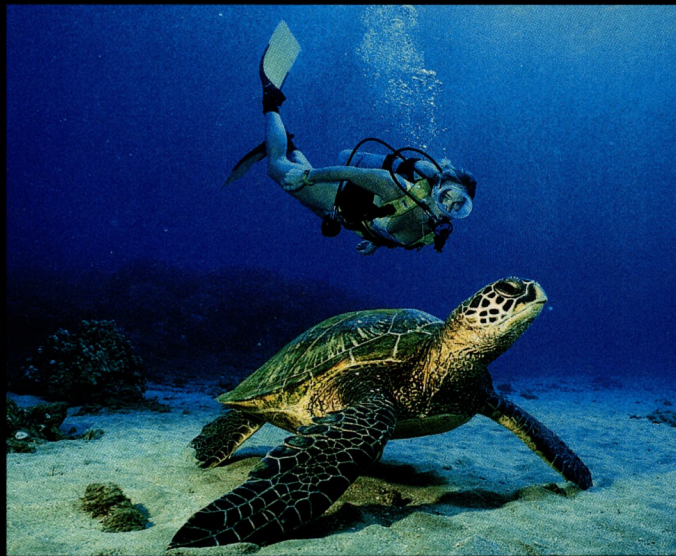
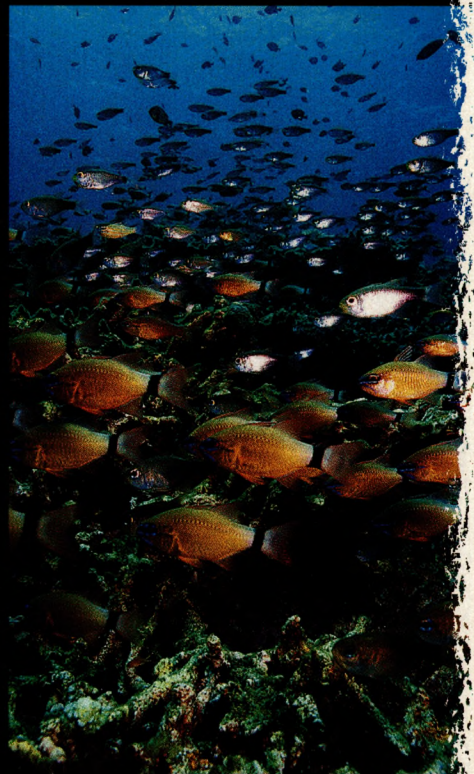
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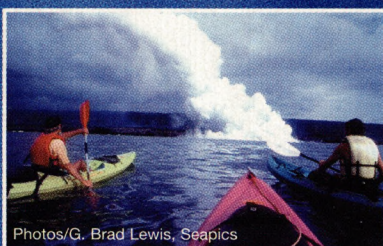


DIVING THE RING OF FIRE



THE BURNING RING THAT HEMS IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN, FROM THE WESTERN COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA, NORTH TO ALASKA, WEST TO JAPAN AND SOUTH TO INDONESIA, EXISTS IN A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN THE FIRES OF DESTRUCTION AND THE SEAS OF CREATION. FOR DIVERS, IT REPRESENTS A WILD AND RAW FRONTIER OF DISCOVERY AND A HOT ZONE OF MARINE SPECIES DIVERSITY—IT IS A BLUE DREAM THAT WAKES US UP AT NIGHT, AND CHASES US AS WE NOD OFF.

Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Indonesia, Borneo



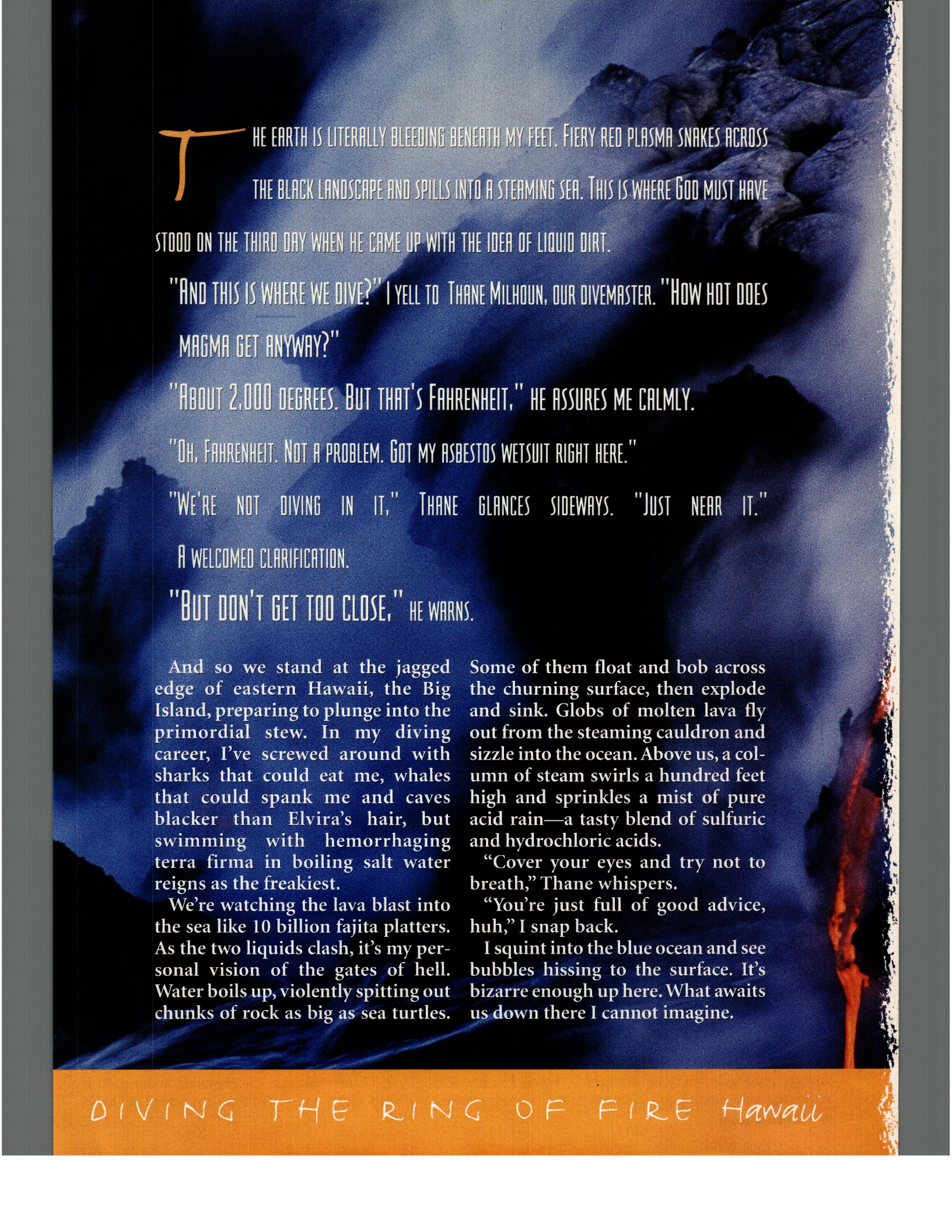
Photos/G. Brad Lewis, Seapics

FIREWATER

Hawaiian Lava Diving

by Fred Garth

Hawaii's ever changing Kona Coast



THE EARTH IS LITERALLY BLEEDING BENEATH MY FEET. FIERY RED PLASMA SNAKES ACROSS THE BLACK LANDSCAPE AND SPILLS INTO A STEAMING SEA. THIS IS WHERE GOD MUST HAVE STOOD ON THE THIRD DAY WHEN HE CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF LIQUID DIAT.

"AND THIS IS WHERE WE DIVE?" I YELL TO THANE MILHOUN, OUR DIVEMASTER. "HOW HOT DOES MAGMA GET ANYWAY?"

"ABOUT 2,000 DEGREES. BUT THAT'S FAHRENHEIT," HE ASSURES ME CALMLY.

"OH, FAHRENHEIT. NOT A PROBLEM. GOT MY ASBESTOS WETSUIT RIGHT HERE."

"WE'RE NOT DIVING IN IT," THANE GLANCES SIDEWAYS. "JUST NEAR IT."

A WELCOMED CLARIFICATION.

"BUT DON'T GET TOO CLOSE," HE WARNS.

And so we stand at the jagged edge of eastern Hawaii, the Big Island, preparing to plunge into the primordial stew. In my diving career, I've screwed around with sharks that could eat me, whales that could spank me and caves blacker than Elvira's hair, but swimming with hemorrhaging terra firma in boiling salt water reigns as the freakiest.

We're watching the lava blast into the sea like 10 billion fajita platters. As the two liquids clash, it's my personal vision of the gates of hell. Water boils up, violently spitting out chunks of rock as big as sea turtles.

Some of them float and bob across the churning surface, then explode and sink. Globbs of molten lava fly out from the steaming cauldron and sizzle into the ocean. Above us, a column of steam swirls a hundred feet high and sprinkles a mist of pure acid rain—a tasty blend of sulfuric and hydrochloric acids.

"Cover your eyes and try not to breathe," Thane whispers.

"You're just full of good advice, huh," I snap back.

I squint into the blue ocean and see bubbles hissing to the surface. It's bizarre enough up here. What awaits us down there I cannot imagine.

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Hawaii



Just about as close as you'd want to be to hot magma. Right: Diver peers into a (cooled!) lava tube at Catacombs.

Photo/James D. Watt, Seapics



Photo/Doug Perrine, Seapics



Photo/Masa Ushioda, Seapics



Spinner Dolphins as far as the eye can see. Left: A primeval forest of ferns.

Photo/Phillip Colla, Seapics

The Red Army As we backroll into the unknown, the first thing that hits us is the sound. It's like jungle drums each time the lava snaps, crackles, pops and BOOMS! This is undoubtedly the loudest dive I've ever been on. It's cranking out enough wattage of pure bass beat to earn Eminem's respect. Strangely, the noise begins to

Having him here comforts me in a misery-loves-company kind of way.

From the corner of my eye comes wild man Thane, with fishing gaff in hand, swimming directly at the flow. He shoves the gaff into the lava and starts pulling molten taffy from the moving wall. Little rocks form around the gaff in about three seconds. He whacks each new rock off and keeps toying with the bowels of creation.

water sports facility on downtown Hilo's waterfront. After we dry off, he gives us a tour of their key dive spots, some rainforests and a giant seaside hot springs. This is the island's quiet east side, compared to the rapid tourism growth around Kona on the western shore. In five trips to this island, this is my first visit to Hilo. I vow to return.

The Yin and Yang It's no surprise that Hawaii's underwater landscape is rugged. It's mostly basaltic lava which quickly drops off thousands of feet. Small stands of coral cling to the rock and provide habitat for some of the weirdest fish you'll ever see, like frogfish, scorpionfish, Spanish Dancers, lionfish and an unprecedented assortment of eels. Local waters are also home to some of the fairest fish, including my favorite of all time, the delicately beautiful Moorish Idol. Because the Hawaiian archipelago is so isolated from any other land mass,

Lava U As I vaguely recall from Dr. Purdum's Geology 101 class, there are two primary types of lava, aa (pronounced ah-ah) and pahoehoe (pronounced pah-hoey-hoey), both words of obvious Hawaiian origin. The one I always liked was aa. Not because it was more interesting geologically, I just liked saying it. Aa lava. I still like saying it. A subclass of lava, called pillow lava, forms into craggy black pillows when molten rock pours into the ocean. As the outer layer cools and turns black, the red-hot goo continues to flow into this newly formed crusty shell. Soon it begins to inflate into a crude pillow-like shape, something you might find on Fred and Wilma Flintstone's granite love seat. It's weird, if not beautiful, but these pillows also have a frightening characteristic. They tend to break off and plummet headlong into the deep. Snuggling close is not recommended.

Photo/James D. Watt, Seapics

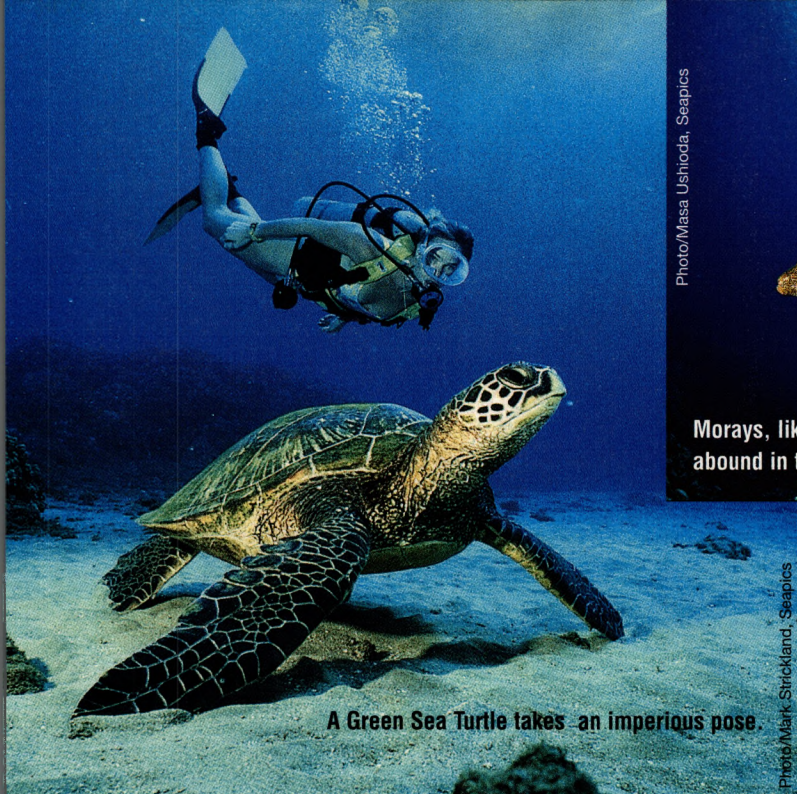


Hot magma:
The life blood of the earth.

subside as we creep toward the lava. The viz is low, maybe 20 feet, but we soon see the advancing red army. The lava's making perfect pillows as it cools and belches into the sea. Author and ace photographer Doug Perrine is by my side ripping off photos.

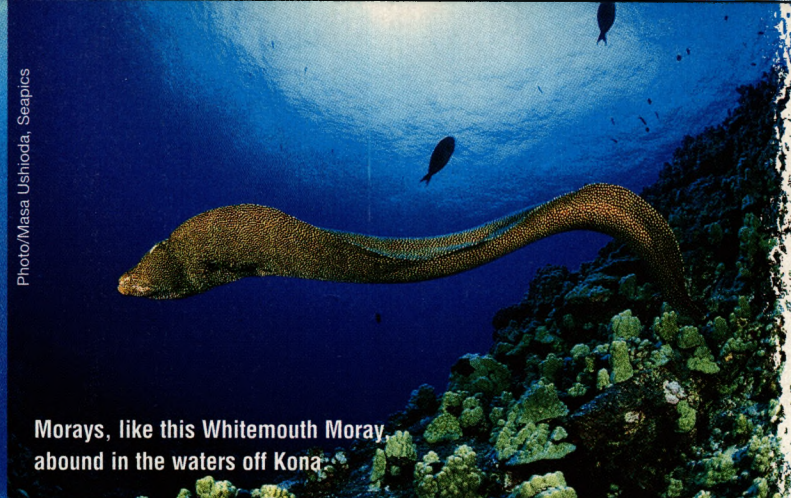
I'm sweating like a pig at a *luau*, and Doug is out of film. We escape the giant hot tub and flop into the boat, forever changed. We have witnessed creation and lived to document it.

When he's not testing fate, Thane runs Planet Ocean, a diving and



A Green Sea Turtle takes an imperious pose.

Photo/Masa Ushioda, Seapics



Morays, like this Whitemouth Moray, abound in the waters off Kona.

Photo/Mark Strickland, Seapics



Imperial Shrimp on Spanish Dancer.

Photo/David Kearnes, Seapics

many species have evolved to make Hawaii the endemic capital of the world. About one-fifth of Hawaii's fish species are found only here.

After our romp in the lava, I prepare to enter the domain of giants, where whales, dolphins, rays and sharks rule the wild blue. I reminisce about my first visit to the west side of the Big Island, commonly referred to as the Kona Coast, in 1991 on the original *Kona Aggressor*. Now, 10 years later, that boat has been moved to Truk Lagoon and replaced by a newly-constructed and highly-stable, 80-foot catamaran. This will be my home for the next few days, and as luck would have it, my old friend Gui Garcia, who was a divemaster on the first *Kona Aggressor*, is now the captain of the new and improved one.

"We're putting the shark cage on the boat this week," he told me slyly. "Could be interesting."

Catering to a group of only 10, the boat crew bathes the guests in the experience: diving with dolphins, abundant food and drink (alcohol is included in the price), a hot tub on the sun deck and up to five or six dives a day, depending on how fanatical you want to be. Our plan is to move south

along the coastline, swinging offshore between dive sites to look for Pilot Whales.

"When we find the whales, we will find the Whitetips," Gui explains.

He's not referring to benign Reef Whitetip Sharks, but the aggressive Oceanic Whitetips (star of the film *Blue Water White Death*). Thus the cage.

"The last time we had the cage on board," Gui begins his fish story, "I saw a giant Oceanic Whitetip. It was at least 10 feet long. At first, I thought it was a false Killer Whale. Then it came right toward the cage." As he tells the story, his hand becomes the shark and brushes right in front of his face for maximum impact. "Just like that," he says wide-eyed. And so we continue to salivate over Whitetips as we scan the horizon.

Even though we're striking out in the blue, the in-shore dives are notable. One morning we spend two hours snorkeling with a pod of Spinner Dolphins. We explore lava tubes and caves. Hammerheads show up here and there. Mantas and turtles visit as well as frogfish, lionfish, octopus and more eels than I've ever seen. If this were Cayman, they'd quickly name the place Eel City.

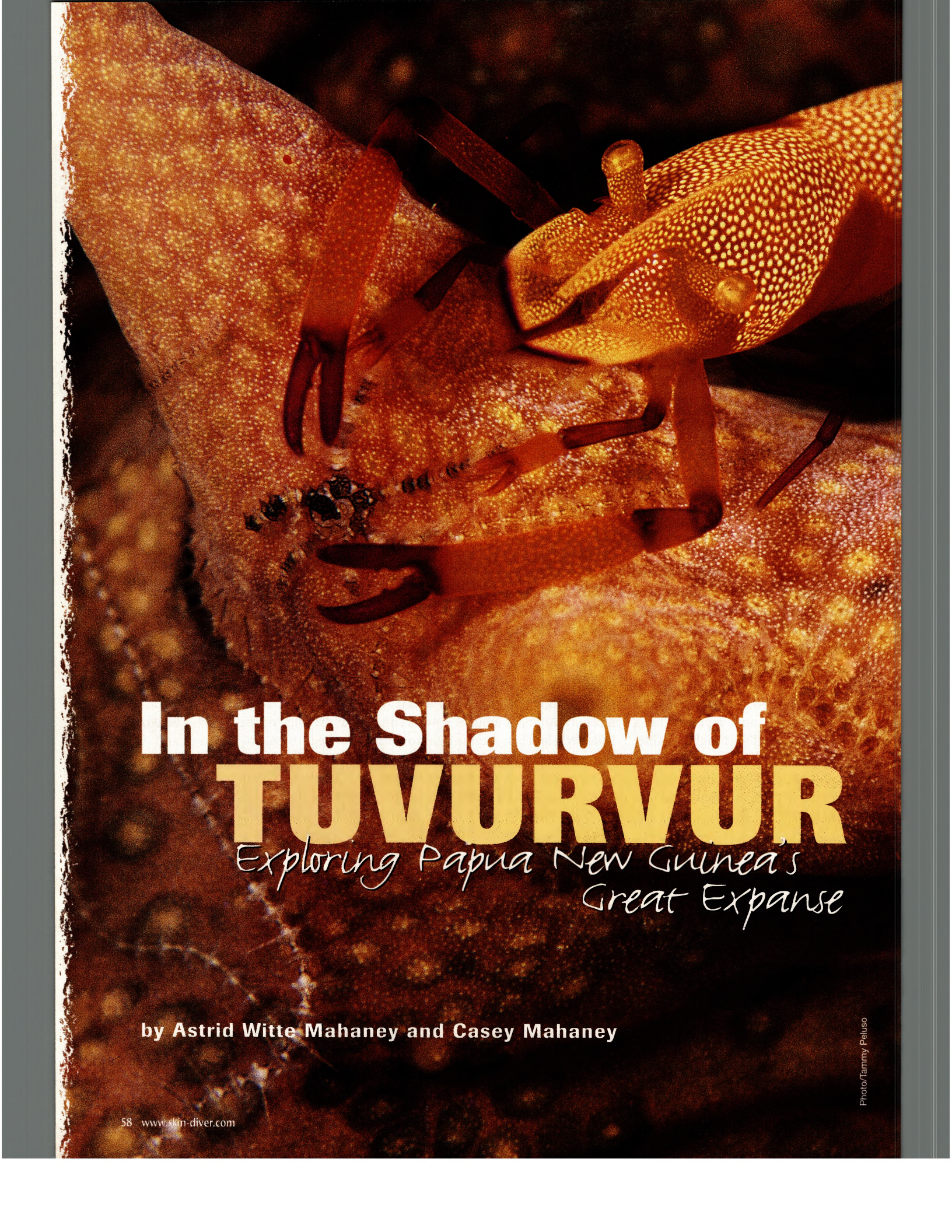
As we move further south, we approach South Point, which is actually the southern most tip of the United States. This is Hawaii's answer to Cape Horn, where ocean currents collide. It's a good spot for Whale Sharks, Humpbacks and our elusive Pilot Whales. Forty-foot cliffs plummet into an angry sea and it looks like the edge of the world. The winds are beginning to kick up and Gui looks across the waves pensively.

"Looks bad," Gui said as white caps covered the sea. "This is no good. We go north for a better anchorage."

With fatiguing grips, we hold on to the Pilot Whale dream. But as the days on the *Aggressor* fly by, the cage stays dry. No whales. Still, Gui and the gang fill our diving cup. I think back to 1991 and realize that this diving is as good, if not better than 10 years ago. That, in itself, is amazing. 🐟

Special thanks to the crew of the Kona Aggressor, Thane at Planet Ocean and Mark and Lori at The Rainforest Retreat Resort.

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Hawaii

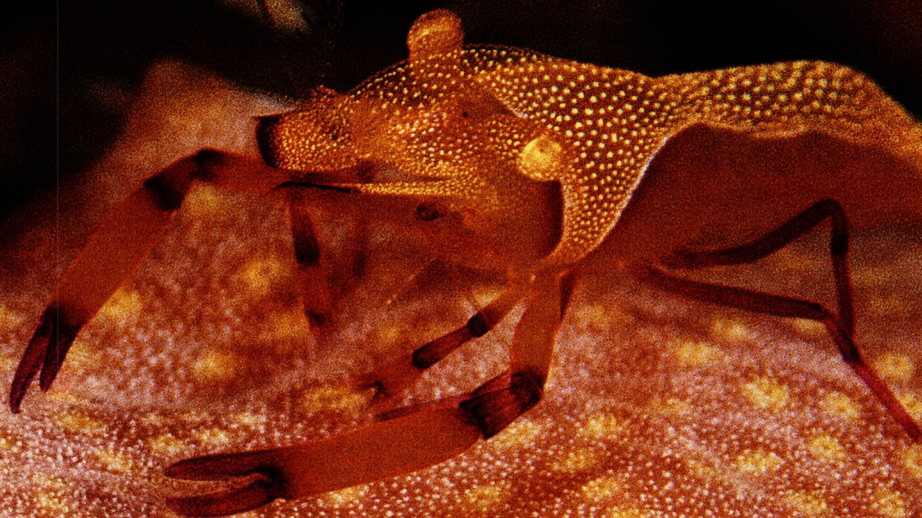


In the Shadow of **TUVURVUR**

*Exploring Papua New Guinea's
Great Expanse*

by Astrid Witte Mahaney and Casey Mahaney

Regal Emperor Shrimp blend in with their brightly-colored sea cucumber host.



BOLSTERED BY AMAZING TALES FROM FELLOW TRAVELERS, PAPUA NEW GUINEA ALWAYS HOVERED IN THE BACK OF OUR MINDS, RELENTLESSLY TEMPTING US WITH VISIONS OF THE ULTIMATE JOURNEY. I'M NOT SURE WHAT HAD BEEN HOLDING US BACK FOR SO LONG. MAYBE JUST PLAIN IGNORANCE. OR, MORE LIKELY, IT WAS SIMPLY CONFUSION ABOUT WHERE TO GET STARTED IN A COUNTRY WITH 900,000 SQUARE MILES OF TOWERING MOUNTAINS, GREAT RIVERS, LUSH VALLEYS, DEEP BLUE OCEAN AND STUNNING LAGOONS.

Rabaul This town was once considered one of the most beautiful in the South Pacific, that is until 1994, when a major volcanic eruption nearly buried it. Lying in the foothills of Tuvuvur volcano, the entire town was blasted with several feet of mud and ash, collapsing buildings, burying plants and roads, and destroying businesses. But, Rabaul has survived. While parts of the town still remain buried, the hotels have reopened, the local bar serves ice-cold beer, there is an open pharmacy, a busy supermarket and a souvenir shop that sells goods from ash-dusted shelves. The roads have been reconstructed, carved into several feet of black mud, and flowers and trees are being replanted, all while mount Tuvuvur continues to rumble in the background, occasionally belching black dust into the air.



A plethora of sea life engulfs a diver off Rabaul.

Photo/Witte-Mahoney, Blue Kiri

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Papua New Guinea

It's a surreal backdrop to the area's incredible diving. A new plume of smoke and ash was rising toward the otherwise blue sky as we descended onto Pete's Mitsubishi Biplane wreck, an intact aircraft brilliantly embellished with red, yellow and orange sponges and soft corals. This site is only a five-minute boat ride from the Submarine Base Resort at Cape Tawui.

Directly in front of the resort, is a wall dive simply referred to as "The Submarine Base Dive." The wall is so steep and starts so shallow that the Japanese used it as a wharf for reprov-

most about, in large part because our friend Tammy Peluso had moved there

took our local guide only a couple of minutes to find not only one, but two

safety in PNG

PNG has received a lot of bad press over the years, instilling unnecessary fears in many travelers. Adhering to common sense—don't walk around the cities by yourself, especially at night, and don't carry a lot of cash—will keep trouble at bay. When traveling into the highlands or to other remote areas, go with organized, professional tour companies and stay at reputable resorts. If you have a forced layover in Port Moresby, you may want to spend this time at the nearby Airways Hotel. The hotel will come and pick you up from the airport and drop you off, store your luggage and allow you to use their facilities, including the swimming pool.

several years ago and opened a photo center in conjunction with Walindi Resort. According to Tammy, Kimbe Bay is what divers' dreams are made of, and nine wonderful dives later, we agreed with her entirely.

Our first day started with a thrilling dolphin experience. Walindi's dive boat is outfitted with a couple of special nets attached to the sides of the boat. Wearing only a mask and snorkel, we zoomed through the water at the same speed as the boat and the dolphins. We saw them below us, next to us, in front of us, and at times, they would turn around and face us for a few seconds. Then, suddenly the dolphins would dive down out of sight and disappear into the blue, ending our fabulous encounter.

The diving proved to be nothing short of awesome. At Susan's Reef, an entire wall was clustered with beautiful combinations of red seawhips, Blue and Orange Elephant Ear Sponges, barrel sponges, seafans and crinoids. I found myself spinning around, swimming back

Pygmies. Masterfully camouflaged, the Pygmy Seahorses look exactly like the seafan in color and shape. Observing them through my magnifying macro lens, I could actually see their microscopic eyes and mouth. But as soon as I'd look at them with my bare eyes, they were lost among the polyps.

At Rastorff Island, our guide took us straight to a pair of Harlequin Ghostpipefish, a strikingly colored Blue Ribbon Eel and a pair of Caledonian Stingers, evil-looking, highly venomous bottom dwellers. In the shallows, we discovered an entire family of black seahorses. I was utterly thrilled. In all my years of diving, I had never seen a seahorse. And in Kimbe Bay, I encountered three different species, ranging in size from smaller than a grain of rice to more than half-a-foot in length.

In 12 days of diving, we hardly scratched the surface of what PNG has to offer. Equally exciting dive regions are scattered throughout the archipelago. And more adventures await within the mysterious highlands and the unique Sepik River region of

The entire seascape at Susan's Reef is clustered with red seawhips.



Photo/Witte-Mahaney, Blue Kirio

sioning during World War II. Now, the shallow, hard coral garden makes for excellent snorkeling, and the sheer wall hosts huge clusters of tangled rope sponge. Other dives include WW II and more recent wrecks, as well as seamounts and the current-swept reefs off the nearby Duke of York Island.

Kimbe Bay For all the tales we'd heard, Kimbe was the place we knew the

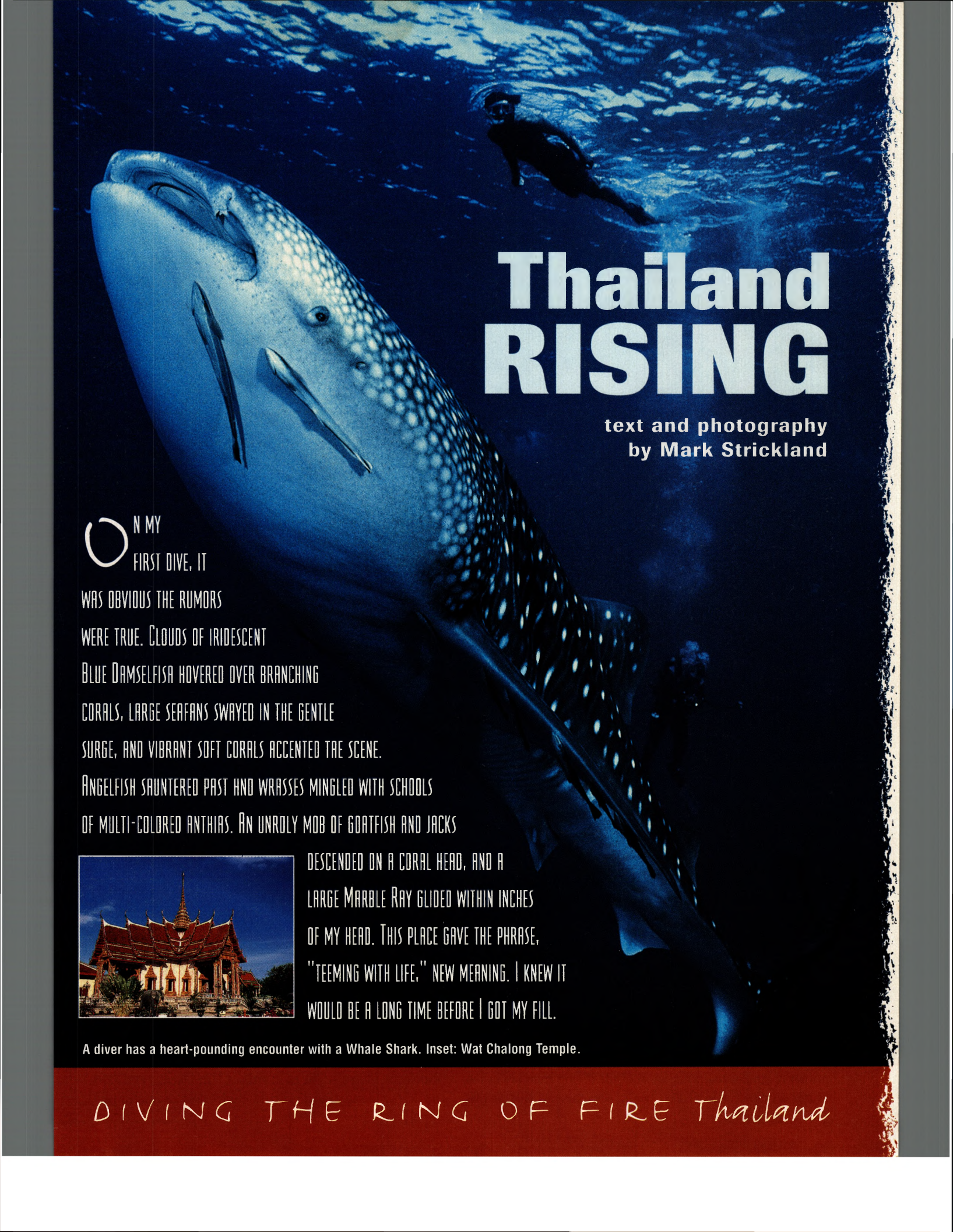
and forth, unsure how to capture this spectacular seascape on film. At Kirsty Janes', another magnificent reef structure, with seawhips, gorgonian and sponges in abundance, our focus was directed toward one particular seafan, which was home to a Pygmy Seahorse. These tiny creatures are only the size of a polyp and extremely difficult to spot. Amazingly, it

Fathers Reef

Between Rabaul and Kimbe Bay, is Fathers Reef, a remote formation that can only be dived via live-aboard. Numerous seamounts boast an abundance of fish, including sharks, fusiliers, batfish, clouds of snappers, damsels, butterflyfish and jacks all gathered around these coral adorned pinnacles. On occasion, the live-aboards, *Febrina* or Peter Hughes' *Star Dancer*, will conduct shark dives at a spot named Killibob's Knobs. Gray Reef Sharks, Whitetips and even a few beefy Silvertips surround divers as soon as they hit the water.

the main island. Papua New Guinea is truly one of the most unexplored countries on earth, and has successfully captured my dreams for adventure for many years to come. 🐠

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Papua New Guinea

A large whale shark is the central focus, swimming diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. Its body is covered in a pattern of white spots and stripes on a dark background. A diver is visible in the upper right, providing a sense of scale. The water is a deep blue with some light filtering through from the surface.

Thailand RISING

text and photography
by Mark Strickland

ON MY
FIRST DIVE, IT

WAS OBVIOUS THE RUMORS
WERE TRUE. CLOUDS OF IRIDESCENT
BLUE DAMSELFISH HOVERED OVER BRANCHING
CORALS, LARGE SEAFANS SWAYED IN THE GENTLE
SURGE, AND VIBRANT SOFT CORALS ACCENTED THE SCENE.
ANGELFISH SAUNTERED PAST AND WRASSES MINGLED WITH SCHOOLS
OF MULTI-COLORED ANTHIAS. AN UNROLY MOB OF GOATFISH AND JACKS



DESCENDED ON A CORAL HEAD, AND A
LARGE MARBLE RAY GLIDED WITHIN INCHES
OF MY HEAD. THIS PLACE GAVE THE PHRASE,
"TEEMING WITH LIFE," NEW MEANING. I KNEW IT
WOULD BE A LONG TIME BEFORE I GOT MY FILL.

A diver has a heart-pounding encounter with a Whale Shark. Inset: Wat Chalong Temple.

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Thailand



A diver hovers above a kaleidoscope of multi-colored soft corals.

That dive was 14 years ago, and I still can't get enough of Thailand. It's a country where even day-to-day life is exotic, from saffron-robed monks making their rounds to herds of water buffalo grazing by the roads. Throughout the country, your senses will be pleasantly assaulted, whether it's the soothing sound of traditional Thai music or the pungent aroma of chilies and garlic sizzling in a wok. Thailand is also blessed with a wealth of scenic beauty, from jagged, jungle-covered mountains to miles of white-sand beaches. Cultural attractions are everywhere, including glittering temples, immense Buddha figures and colorful local markets. Among the greatest pleasures, however, are the Thai people themselves. They have a long tradition of warmth and hospitality, and seem perpetually cheerful. It is no wonder their country is known as "The Land of Smiles."

Of course, exotic shouldn't be equated with rustic. Hotels and dive boats range from merely comfortable to flat-out luxurious. And, with its modern infrastructure, Thailand is very user-friendly; getting around and communicating are generally quite easy.

Blessed with lengthy coastlines on two different oceans, Thailand is a diver's paradise. Geographically, the country can be compared to an elephant's head. To the north, the "head" is primarily landlocked, while most of the diving areas are in the south, on either side of the "trunk." On the east side of this

peninsula lies the Gulf of Thailand, actually an appendage of the Pacific Ocean. To the west is the Andaman Sea, marking the eastern edge of the Indian Ocean. Diving opportunities abound on both sides of Thailand, although the Gulf of Thailand, with dozens of dive centers and countless idyllic islands, is primarily known as a mecca for dive training. Most experienced divers agree that Thailand's best diving is to the west. The Andaman Sea generally has better visibility, greater species diversity and features a huge fleet of day-boats and live-aboards. Diving here is concentrated in five main regions: Phuket, Phi Phi Islands, Similan Islands, Northern Islands and Ko Surin.

Phuket South East Asia's premier resort area, Phuket is the gateway to the Andaman Sea. Daytrip sites like Shark Point, Anemone Reef and Ko Doc Mai often have limited visibility, but are rich in marine life, including lionfish, clownfish, cuttlefish and Zebra Sharks. The vast majority of Thailand's live-aboard fleet is based here, offering trips from 2 to 10 days, visiting some or all of the Andaman's other regions.

Two for One

Many Phuket-based live-aboards also include an opportunity to dive in the neighboring country of Myanmar (sometimes called Burma). Having been largely closed to the outside world until 1997, diving is still in its infancy there. Many operators combine Thailand's Similan and Northern Islands with several days in Myanmar. Thus, it is possible to experience the best diving of two different countries in one live-aboard trip.



A pair of Harlequin Shrimp noshing on a Crown-of-Thorns Sea Star. Inset above: A Reticulated Moray Eel.

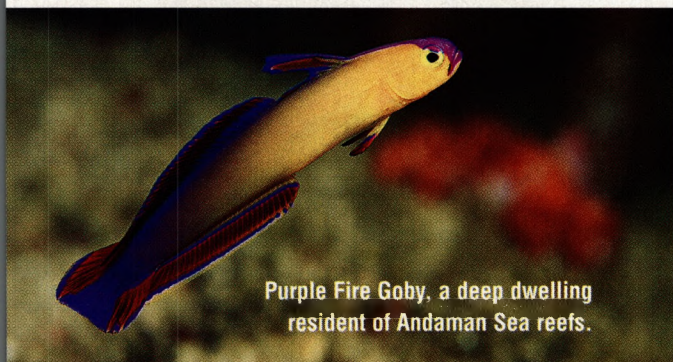


Phi Phi Islands The Phi Phi Islands are known for caverns and caves, shallow walls, diverse marine life, good snorkeling and spectacular topside scenery. In rocky reefs divers can find scorpionfish and Blue-ringed Angelfish or cruise over sandy bottoms for Zebra Sharks and Bluespotted Rays. This area is a good choice for those with limited time as there are plenty of accommodations and dive operations on the island, and day trips are available from Phuket.

Southern Islands The twin sites of Hin Daeng (Red Rock) and Hin Muang (Purple Rock) both offer dramatic walls,

cuttlefish, Zebra Sharks and huge Morays. Whale Shark and Manta sightings are always a possibility, too. Hin Muang also features incredible soft coral and anemones. Another regional favorite is Ko Ha Yai, where a huge cavern extends well back into the island. A large air-filled chamber enables divers to surface and view the stalactites. If a swell is running, clouds form and disappear in the chamber every few seconds as the waves cause rapid pressure changes.

Similan Islands Known as the “jewel of Thai Marine National Parks,” this area is made up of nine rocky islands



Purple Fire Goby, a deep dwelling resident of Andaman Sea reefs.

with rugged topography, lush green interiors and fine, white-sand beaches. Underwater, marine life is abundant and diverse, and the terrain highly varied. Signature sites include East of Eden, offering great wide-angle scenery (seafans, soft corals and schooling fish) and also good macro creatures (Purple Fire Gobies, allied cowries, unusual nudibranchs). Elephant's Head is a high-profile reef, with huge granite boulders rising from deep water, extending well above the surface. There are intriguing tunnels and swim-throughs, good coral growth and an excellent variety of fish life. Fantasea Reef features friendly, abundant fish, unusual species (Ribbon Eels, jawfish, Mantis Shrimp) and dramatic topography. Christmas Point is another rocky, multi-level reef, home to White-collar Butterflyfish, Clown Triggerfish and endemic Andaman Sweetlips. Typical invertebrates include nudibranchs and Tiger and Egg Cowries.

Northern Islands One of the premier sites here is Ko Bon, a jagged limestone ridge, dropping beyond 140 feet. Schooling Bluefin Trevally and checkered snappers often terrorize clouds of Silversides, and there is a good chance of finding Zebra Sharks or Manta Rays. At Ko Tachai, twin rocky pinnacles are connected by a coral-covered ridge. Abundant reef fish, schooling snappers and barracudas are the featured attraction, as are batfish and Manta cleaning stations.

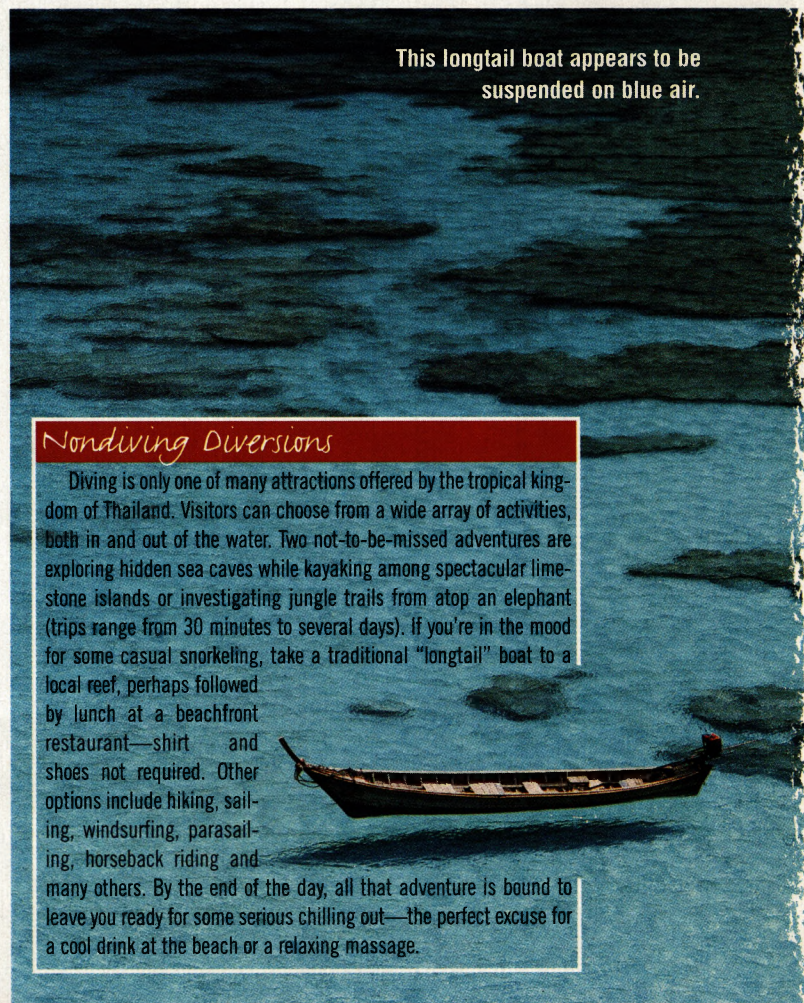
Ko Surin Actually two main islands and several smaller ones, Surin is home to a wide range of terrestrial wildlife. Underwater, divers are likely to see species seldom encountered elsewhere in the region, such as

Barramundi Cod, Napoleon Wrasse and Bumphead Parrotfish. This is also an outstanding area for snorkeling.

Nine miles east of Surin is Richelieu Rock. This limestone pinnacle is considered among Thailand's premier dive sites, mainly because of species diversity. From Mantis Shrimp to morays, nudibranchs and needlefish, there seems to be no end to the variety. Lush soft corals thrive in steady currents, and shallower sections are dominated by green, beige and purple anemones, providing homes for porcelain crabs and five species of clownfish. Cuttlefish make frequent appearances, often mating and laying eggs. Schooling fish are common, including snappers, Chevron Barracuda and Big-eye Jacks. Occasionally even ghost pipefish, frogfish and Harlequin Shrimp are encountered.

I can think of few places I'd rather be than Thailand. Even after 6,000 dives in these waters, I still look forward to every one, and frequently discover things I've never noticed before. Above water, the same friendly people and fascinating culture I found when I first arrived are alive and well. For superb diving and magical experiences, Thailand has the makings of superb exotic adventure. 🐠

Special thanks to Fantasea Divers and Ocean Rover Live-aboard Cruises.



This longtail boat appears to be suspended on blue air.

Nondiving Diversions

Diving is only one of many attractions offered by the tropical kingdom of Thailand. Visitors can choose from a wide array of activities, both in and out of the water. Two not-to-be-missed adventures are exploring hidden sea caves while kayaking among spectacular limestone islands or investigating jungle trails from atop an elephant (trips range from 30 minutes to several days). If you're in the mood for some casual snorkeling, take a traditional "longtail" boat to a local reef, perhaps followed by lunch at a beachfront restaurant—shirt and shoes not required. Other options include hiking, sailing, windsurfing, parasailing, horseback riding and many others. By the end of the day, all that adventure is bound to leave you ready for some serious chilling out—the perfect excuse for a cool drink at the beach or a relaxing massage.

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Thailand

GROUND ZE

Currents of

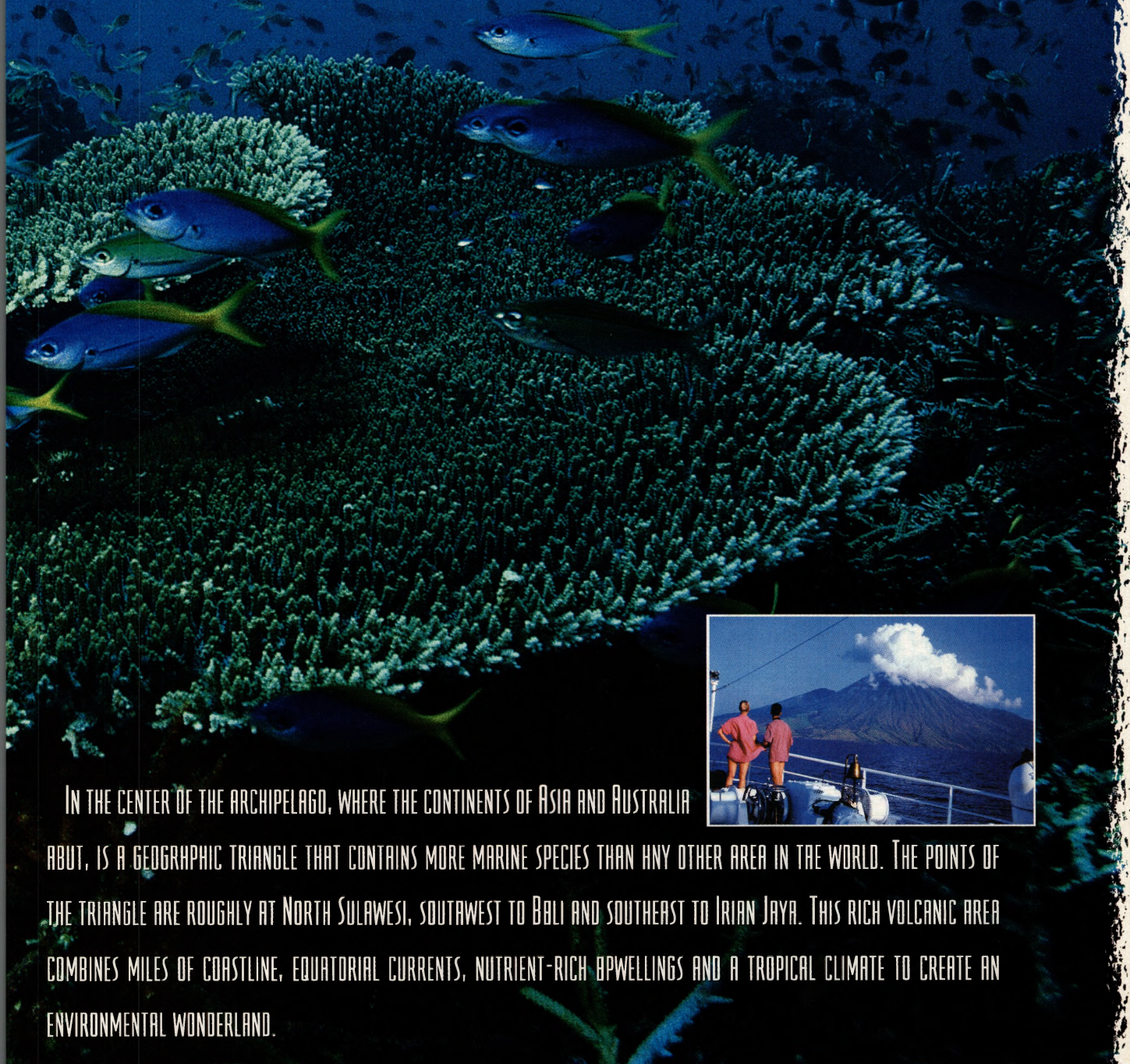
A LONG THE WESTERN EDGE OF THE "RING OF FIRE," IS INDONESIA, A LAND OF CONTRASTS. ITS 13,000 ISLANDS STRETCH WIDER FROM EAST TO WEST THAN THE UNITED STATES AND ARE HOME TO MORE THAN 100 DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS SPEAKING AT LEAST 300 LANGUAGES. THE LAND OFFERS DRAMATIC VISTAS WITH TOPOGRAPHY THAT VARIES FROM MANGROVES AND VOLCANOES TO RAIN FORESTS AND SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS. UNDERWATER, THE DEPTHS OF THE INDIAN AND PACIFIC OCEANS MEET AND MINGLE.

A school of Yellow and Blueback Fusiliers, Kri Island, Irian Jaya.

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Text and Photography
by Denise Nielsen Tackett
and Larry Tackett

Life Collide in Indonesia



IN THE CENTER OF THE ARCHIPELAGO, WHERE THE CONTINENTS OF ASIA AND AUSTRALIA MEET, IS A GEOGRAPHIC TRIANGLE THAT CONTAINS MORE MARINE SPECIES THAN ANY OTHER AREA IN THE WORLD. THE POINTS OF THE TRIANGLE ARE ROUGHLY AT NORTH SULAWESI, SOUTHWEST TO BALI AND SOUTHEAST TO IRIAN JAYA. THIS RICH VOLCANIC AREA COMBINES MILES OF COASTLINE, EQUATORIAL CURRENTS, NUTRIENT-RICH UPWELLINGS AND A TROPICAL CLIMATE TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENTAL WONDERLAND.

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Indonesia

Bali Island of the Gods and land of fiery volcanoes with fertile valleys shrouded in mist. This divine island has much to offer, yet most visitors go no further than the beaches of Sanur, Kuta and Nusa Dua in the south. Looking for

Bungalows where Emiko, the dive operations manager, gave us a briefing, "There's a reef with scattered coral heads in front. The buoy marks the easiest point of entry. You'll need porters to dive the drop-off and the wreck. Let me know when you

Dragon Hunt

No trip is complete without a visit to the infamous park denizens, the Komodo dragons. These carnivorous lizards are the world's largest and can exceed 10 feet in length.

Armed with long sticks to deter aggressive lizards, the rangers led us on a "dragon walk" through the bush. At first we hung back, not sure the sticks would work when confronted with an irate dragon, but we got a bit braver after our first encounter. It seemed dragons were lethargic when well-fed, and the rangers had to make sure they stayed that way.



A baitball swirls over a vivid soft coral off Komodo.

Blacktipped Sharks. Feather stars, soft corals and reef fish added plenty of color to the black-sand bottom. Late afternoon was the best time to see the many cleaning stations in action.

At one end of the beach was the *Liberty*, a beautifully overgrown World War II wreck that wasn't completely sub-

merged until 1963 when Gunung Agung erupted. Resident jacks circled off the stern at 45 feet. The bow was at 130 feet. Exposed rocks at the other end of the beach marked the drop-off with lots of growth and a school of Bumphead Parrotfish.

something different, we headed three hours north and east.

We drove along the coast and through the mountains on narrow winding roads that seemed to be perpetually under construction. Along the way, we passed quaint artisan villages and colorful religious processions.

Against the imposing backdrop of Gunung Agung, a volcano that last erupted in 1963, is Tulamben, a small village with a rocky beach and great diving.

We settled in at Paradise Beach

want to dive and how many porters you want. How much weight do you need?"

The keyword for diving at Paradise is independence. You dive when, where, how long and how deep you want. You're on your own unless you request a guide. That also means you set up and rinse your own gear.

The house reef, a few steps from where you gear up, has reef patches, giant sponges and open sandy areas to explore. Visibility was over 100 feet and we found everything from Harlequin Shrimp to

Komodo Leaving the tranquil east coast behind, we headed south to busy Benoa Harbor to board *Pelagian*, a first-class yacht that took us past Lombok and Sumbawa to the superb diving of

Komodo and Rinca islands. This was our first trip to Nusa Tenggara Province, an area of biogeographical transition between Asia and Australia.

On the way to Komodo we stopped at several sites around Sumbawa Island. The diving here was easy and pleasant with nice stands of corals and oddities like bubble shells, Ghost Pipefishes, Zebra Crabs and stargazers. Night dives were good too, and the water was a toasty 86°F.

As we approached Komodo,

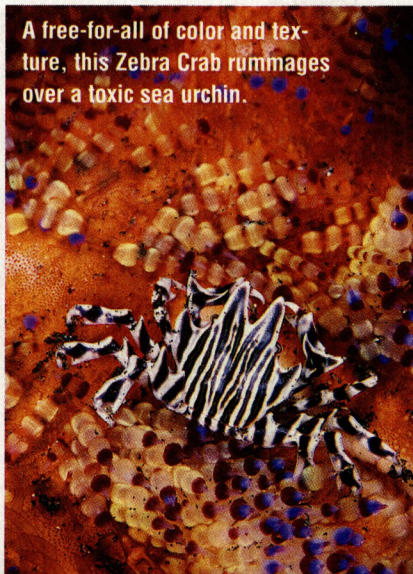
Dive an Underwater Volcano

Mahengetang, in the picturesque Sangihe Islands, is one of the few places where you can dive on an underwater volcano. The vent sits just under the surface amid a desolate seascape strewn with boulders coated with yellow sulfurous deposits. Hundreds of tiny bubbles race to the surface as hot gases escape from deep in the heart of the volcano. The water is noticeably warmer here, and although nothing seems to be living, a closer look reveals tiny sea stars, algae, small worms and sprouting corals. In contrast, the other side of the volcano has already developed into a beautiful coral reef.

In the distance, the still active Siau volcano glows red, spewing plumes of lava and smoke into the heavens.



A free-for-all of color and texture, this Zebra Crab rummages over a toxic sea urchin.



volcanoes gave way to barren hills and scattered islands surrounded by swift currents that churn and roll.

At Sunda Strait, water temperatures dropped to the mid-70s, visibility decreased and the nutrient-rich waters seemed to support more reef life than anywhere else. Strong currents meant lots of filter feeders, and the reefs were a riot of color with seafans, soft corals, sponges and feather stars covering every square inch of available substrate. There are no bare spots and no shortage of fish either.

One day on Cannibal Rock, a ball of baitfish so dense it blocked out the sun, came to the reef. Giant groupers, snappers, jacks and sharks circled, waiting to penetrate the wary mass. Out of nowhere a school of tuna breached the group, the silversides flashed away, then came together. Order was restored,

and the best diving we'd seen in years.

The base camp was the brainchild of Max Ammer, an enthusiastic fellow from Holland who pioneered diving in these parts while searching for salvageable remnants of World War II. In 1994, he set up a skeleton camp and has been upgrading it ever since. At the time of our visit, Max had four thatch water bungalows built along a jetty, an open-air dining bungalow with a small library, two shower shacks and two individual toilet shacks with water (one eastern and one western style). Another was under construction.

The bungalows were clean and roomy. There was no furniture to speak of but each room had two windows, a worktable and a 220V charging station. The mattress rested on the bamboo-covered floor and mosquito nets were suspended from the walls.



The spartan bungalows at Kri Island Base Camp in Irian Jaya.

ments. Generally, the fish congregated where the current met the reef, and we wanted to be right at the edge where the current slacks off. Otto, our dive guide, did a remarkable job of dropping us at precisely the right spot every time.

The limestone Wawyai Islands in Kaboei Bay were an hour from camp past a series of pearl farms. We spent the day there, diving as much as we wanted. They were great for small and unusual finds like mollusks that resemble giant lumpy nudibranchs. This was truly a world away from everyday life.

I couldn't remember ever seeing so many fish so consistently at so many different sites. And the little stuff was fabulous too—Pygmy Seahorses, crinoid shrimps and squat lobsters, Mandarin-

in the muck at Lembah Strait

Lembah Strait has earned a reputation for superb muck diving and unusual animals like stargazers, unique Ghost Pipefish, Pygmy Seahorses, myriad nudibranchs, sea moths, fingered dragonets and the like. Most are small and/or well camouflaged, so it's best to stick with the dive guides who are great at spotting the unusual.

Well-hidden Ghost Pipefish.



A rule of thumb here is if the guide points at something, take a picture of it even if you can't see what it is—you can figure it out later when the film is developed. Sounds crazy, but it's true. There are some weird creatures in Lembah Strait, and it takes a while to develop your "critter eyes."

then chaos again, then order...all afternoon. Being in the thick of the bait ball was the most exciting diving we've ever done, no question about it.

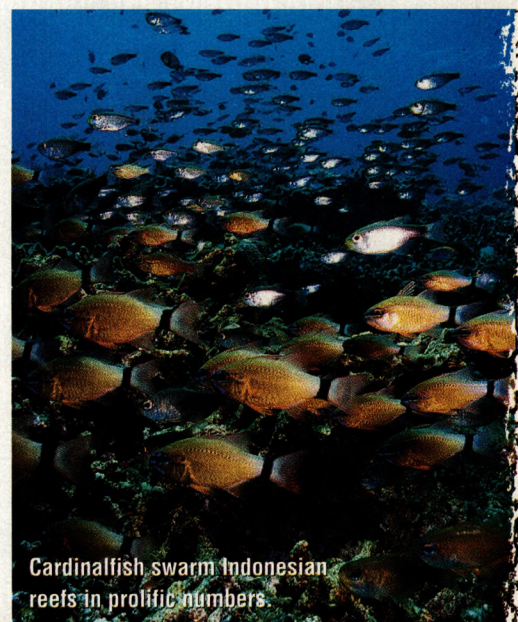
Irian Jaya Recently renamed Papua Barat or West Papua, this land is teeming with unexplored potential and adventure. Most of the land is under a thick cover of virgin rainforest. Mountains give way to flat coastal areas with meandering rivers in the south and white beaches in the north.

The Bird's Head Peninsula in the northwest takes its name from the shape of the island of New Guinea. We transferred our gear to a boat and headed for Kri Island Base Camp. We had come in search of the ultimate dive and were prepared to sacrifice comfort and other amenities in exchange. What we found was comfortable accommodation with an easygoing ambience,

The camp is on a white-sand beach on Kri, a heavily forested island in the Rajah Empat group in the Seram Sea. There are four main islands: Waigeo (closest to Kri), Batanta, Salawati, Misool and many smaller ones. The small limestone islands are undercut and clustered together, like the rock islands of Palau.

There's good diving most anywhere you jump in, and Max has found several exceptional sites near Kri. His personal favorite, Cape Kri, features a parade of sweetlips, mackerels, barracuda and occasional Manta Rays and mobulas. My favorites were Chicken Reef and Sardine Reef. Chicken Reef had lots of red tree corals, while Sardine Reef was covered with huge seafans. Both had mind-boggling numbers of fish and exceptionally large giant clams.

Many sites were swept with strong currents, and dives were timed to take advantage of manageable water move-



Cardinalfish swarm Indonesian reefs in prolific numbers.

fish, nudibranchs, soft coral crabs, shrimp gobies and so on. My biggest problem was deciding which lens to use—macro or wide-angle.

In terms of fish life, color and lush reefs, Irian Jaya is destined to become the standard against which all diving is measured. ➤

BORNEO

In the Middle of an Eco-overflow

LONG KNOWN AS THE LAND OF HEADHUNTERS, POISON DARTS AND IMPENETRABLE JUNGLE, I IMAGINED MYSELF DARTING OUT OF THE BORNEO BUSH CLUTCHING MY FILM OF ORANGUTANS AND HORNBILLS (WITH TATTOOED WARRIORS IN HOT PURSUIT), LEAPING INTO A SPUTTERING BIPLANE AND HEADING OUT TO SEA AS WOODEN SPEARS GLANCED OFF THE LANDING GEAR.

WHEN, AFTER ABOUT 20 HOURS OF FLIGHT TIME FROM THE WEST COAST (BEING PAMPERED ALL THE WAY BY THE MALAYSIAN AIRLINE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS), I ARRIVED IN THE MALAYSIAN STATE OF SABAH ON THE NORTH COAST OF BORNEO, IT DIDN'T LOOK ANYTHING LIKE MY DAYDREAMS. FOR SURE THERE'S SOME DEEP DARK JUNGLE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, BUT THE PART I SAW LOOKED LIKE AN EXTREMELY LUXURIOUS RESORT ON A WHITE SAND BEACH IN FRONT OF A PICTURESQUE BAY DOTTED BY TREE-COVERED ISLANDS. THERE WAS NOT ONE SCOWLING, SPEAR-TOTING WARRIOR IN SITE.

by Doug Perrine

Layang Layang After a night recharging my batteries in a soft bed, I was ready to begin the real adventure. I climbed into the chartered Twin Otter with the other passengers, and an hour later, we touched down on a thin ring of coral isolated in the expanse of the South China Sea. "It doesn't get much more remote than this," I had to keep telling myself after I was escorted to my air-conditioned room with a hot shower, telephone, laundry service and CNN and MTV pumped in via satellite. My balcony looked out onto a freshwater swimming pool, filled with water from the resort's desalinization plant. All this on an island just over half a mile long and 300 yards wide.

There's also a Malaysian navy base on the island, which has prevented this particular patch of coral from suffering the ravages and destructive practices of fishermen.

The result is a reef of such unsullied beauty that it compels me to drag out hackneyed terms such as pristine and vibrant. A 6,000-foot wall, decorated with gorgonian and barrel sponges, rises up to a narrow shallow reef ledge cov-

Giant Bumphead Parrotfish off Layang Layang.



ered with both delicate and massive hard corals. Amongst table corals, up to four yards across, flit a melange of brilliantly colored reef fish, stunningly demonstrating our proximity to the world's center of biodiversity.

On dives, ghostly processions of Hammerheads would glide past—always just beyond and below. The water temperature is 86°F. I look over at the reef and my incongruity buzzer sounds. Big schools of Hammerheads

are supposed to be seen in cool water in places with upwellings and black volcanic rock. What are they doing circling this beautiful tropical reef? Are they lost? The guides assure me that they are here all year.

And there is plenty of other stuff floating around in the blue to keep those tank-bangers clanging: Manta Rays, Mobula Rays, Gray Reef Sharks, etc. Closer to the reef, Whitetip and Zebra Sharks rest on ledges, and Hawksbill Turtles poke around. At some sites, swirling tornadoes of Bigeye Jacks swallow up divers. Great schools of Bumphead Parrotfish roam the reef like herds of buffalo, occasionally pausing to graze.



Seafans drape the walls off Layang Layang.

Photo/Michael Aw, Seapics

Sometimes the action speeds up to the point of sensory overload. A school of Yellowtail Parrotfish dashes by in a panic. In the middle of the school, a couple Hammerheads are feeding. Gray Reef Sharks are attacking the bottom, and a Whitetip is working on the top. Giant Trevally are rounding up the edges of the school. One of the trevally hits a parrotfish, but it escapes and ducks under a coral head. Suddenly, everything jumps into warp speed. Sixty-pound trevallies zip past me and frantically circle the coral head, turning sideways and trying to wedge themselves inside to get at the wounded fish.

Trying to focus on a single subject is difficult. On

SHOOTER ALERT!

The Underwater Malaysia International Imaging Festival will be held Sept. 2-11, 2001. Join world-famous pros, try the latest photo and video gear, enjoy the region's top resorts and dive some of the richest waters in the world (Kota Kinabalu, Labuan, Layang Layang, Mabul and Sipadan). For information, call (866) UWPHOTO, or visit on the web at www.underwatermalaysia.com or www.skin-diver.com.

one dive I attempt to photograph a turtle when a Manta Ray swims right over my head. After a week of cruising past this gorgeous reef in the eternal search for Hammerheads I request a macro dive, oblivious to the incongruity of myself—a “big animal

photographer” arriving in big animal heaven and begging for little stuff. At first, I’m happy because I don’t

have to keep swimming. I find a nice cleaning station, set up my 100 mm macro lens and wait for some customers to show up. As I’m focusing in on a little cleaning wrasse, a giant Manta swims by just behind it. I’m just getting my concentration back when a Gray Reef Shark comes within inches to me. So much for macro. I finally decide to go with the flow, which is usually at high-speed, down current.

If you’re not into drift-diving, this is definitely not your place. Even experienced drift-divers may find Layang Layang challenging. The currents vary from nil to gonzo. And when they are really fast, there may be up and down currents, too. Clearly not a place for the novice diver. And don’t forget your safety sausage.

Your inner Indiana Jones may feel a bit stifled in the comfort of the resort, but get him out on the reef, and he’ll feel right at home. Most divers end up leaving the resort with their snorkels still firmly in their mouths, reluctant even to dry off.

Sipadan Seen from the surface, Sipadan Island doesn’t amount to much—a flat little speck of land that you can walk around in 20 minutes or less. A cross-sectional diagram is



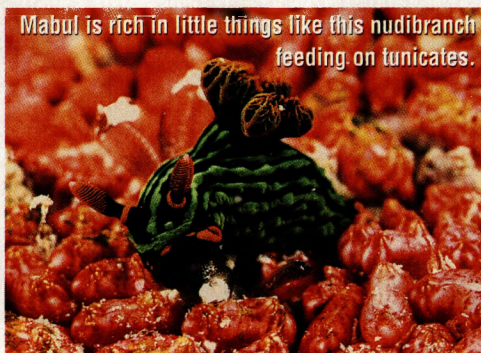
A diver ascends into a spiraling vortex of Chevron Barracuda, commonly encountered off Sipadan.



pretty impressive, though. The island is the tip of a needle-like spire that rises straight up from the sea bottom thousands of feet below. It expands into a bit of a bulb near the top, so the reef wall is actually undercut below the bulb. The reef surrounding Sipadan, although considerably larger than the island itself, is still pretty small, but the amount of marine life packed onto this meager acreage is nothing short of phenomenal. The dense schools of jacks, barracuda, Bumphead Parrotfish and batfish are all the more impressive because of their near-complete habituation to divers. With nowhere to go on this little reef surrounded by deep ocean, they have had to learn to ignore the diver traffic. A calm and coordinated diver can swim right into a school and be swallowed up by it. Sipadan is the only place I know of where a group of divers can spot more than a dozen turtles at very close range during a dive, and, when discussing the dive during the surface interval, no one will even mention the turtles. Sure, on the first dive or two, a new arrival will point at every turtle, but by the second day, nobody pays any attention. They are simply everywhere. Not many people even bother to watch them lay their eggs on the beach at night or go see the hatchlings released in the afternoon. And turtles are not the only things that go unnoticed and underappreciated on Sipadan. Garden eels, nudibranchs, giant clams, Mantis Shrimp, anemones with clownfish, flashlight fish—all sorts

of things that would draw a crowd elsewhere fail to attract the attention of divers mesmerized by the panoramic view of a reef that is packed with everything that can thrive in an oceanic preserve where no fishing is allowed.

Mabul A small island on the continental shelf off of Borneo, Mabul is a little over half an hour away from Sipadan. Its waters host an amazing variety of small fish and invertebrates. These include many prizes to make a macro photographer's heart pound, from gaudy Flamboyant Cuttlefish to Blue-ringed Octopus to Harlequin Ghostpipefish to frogfish in every color of the rainbow. There are actually more species of nudibranchs and other macro critters



Mabul is rich in little things like this nudibranch feeding on tunicates.

here than on Sipadan, but fewer turtles and large schooling fish. There is both coral reef diving and muck diving, mostly in depths of five to 60 feet. Visibility ranges from pretty good to pretty awful, but is generally more than adequate for macro photography. Most of the critters can also be found at other locales in the far western Pacific region, so what

makes Mabul so special?

First, destructive fishing practices, such as dynamite fishing and cyanide fishing, have been halted around Mabul for years, allowing the reefs to recover. While food fishing occurs, there is no aquarium collecting or other removal of the small things divers come here to see.

Second, there are daily dive trips to Sipadan. Many divers come to Mabul primarily to dive at Sipadan, but usually discover that the diving on Mabul can be just as interesting. Divers staying on Sipadan often come across to Mabul for macro diving. Having access to both sites gives underwater photographers a mixture of great wide-angle and macro opportunities. However, the resort accommodations are more comfortable and luxurious on Mabul.

And third, the divemasters on Mabul are unsurpassed in their ability to spot even the most reclusive, tiniest and best camouflaged of those weird little creatures that make tropical oceans such interesting places. Sure, there might be just as many species on any of the 5,000 other islands in the region, but how many would you see wandering around the reefs on your own or with an untrained guide? Most of the guides on Mabul know more species by common and scientific name than your average Ph.D., and they often can tell you something about its diurnal habits, breeding cycles, etc. At least one of the dive directors there has discovered new species and published scientific papers on his findings in Mabul. Every time I go to Mabul I not only see a lot of things I've never seen before, but I also learn a lot.

Labuan BY ERIC HANAUER

Labuan isn't considered one of Malaysia's glamour dive destinations. The island city is a shipping hub and an international banking center. But it offers something that others lack: historic and picturesque wreck dives. North of Brunei Bay, Labuan was a strategic port during World War II, and more recently, a commerce center. With all the ship traffic that resulted, it was inevitable that a few would go down.

Four shipwrecks lie in 80 to 100 feet of water, two of them dating back to WW II. They are known by prosaic names: the American wreck, the Australian wreck, the cement wreck and the blue water wreck.

The misnamed Aussie wreck had nothing to do with Australians. Research showed it to be a Dutch East India trader built in 1900, converted into a troop transport during the war, and scuttled by the Dutch Navy as the Japanese invaded. It was salvaged in 1942, renamed the *Imbabu Maru* and put



Frogfish come in nearly every color off Mabul.

into the service of the emperor. In 1944 it hit a mine off Labuan and sank a second time.

The rounded stern has four large rectangular openings where windows used to be, revealing the steering mechanism. On my dive the visibility gods weren't cooperating, but I swam along the deck anyway, shooting photos of portholes, winches and cleats. According to Borneo Divers' Randy Davis, April to October are the best months to dive Labuan, with viz ranging 40 to 50 feet in the inner harbor.

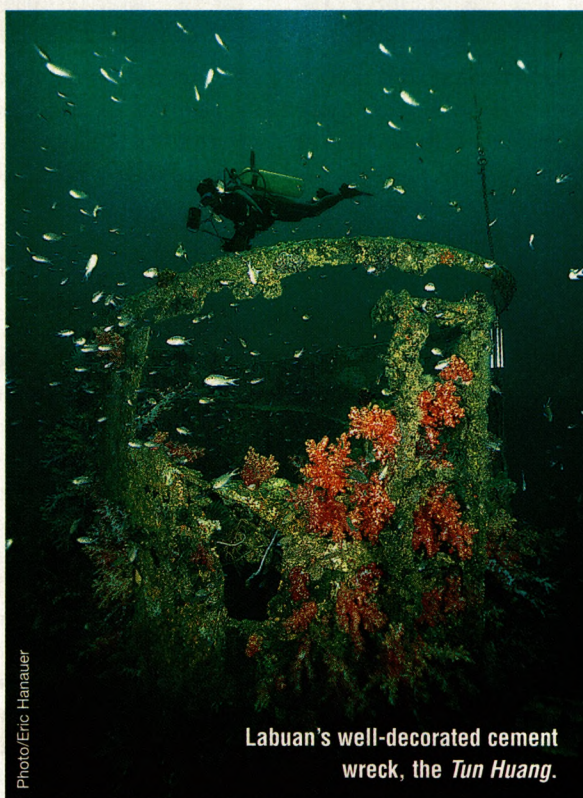
The American wreck is the *Salute*, a minesweeper that sank in 1945 after hitting a mine, killing nine crewmen. The *Salute* is broken in half, the bow section split open and the stern intact. Munitions and supplies are still inside, including gas masks, boots and bottles. Depth charges still lie in their launchers. The stern is a haven for schooling fishes, turtles and rays, while the main mast projects horizontally over the sand.

Further out in the bay are two contemporary wrecks.

Visibility is better there and marine growth more profuse. The *Tun Huang* was carrying a load of cement from Taiwan to Brunei for the sultan's palace when it hit a reef in 1980. Lying upright in 80 feet, every surface is covered with spectacular sponges, gorgonians and soft corals. Despite the green water of a springtime bloom, I found numerous photo ops. Deck stairways and lifeboat davits are gardens of color. The forward mast forms a huge cross, swarmed by fish. According to Davis, much of the marine life was swept off by a 1997 storm, but it has returned with a vengeance.

The blue water wreck is the *Mabini Pride*, a Philippine fishing trawler that sank after catching fire in 1981. Virtually intact and covered by rich

marine growth, she lies on her port side in 115 feet. Located 21 miles from port, she receives the least diving pressure of the Labuan wrecks. Both of the modern wrecks offer opportunities for close-up photography rivaling a rich reef environment. If your diving plans include Malaysia and you are interested in shipwrecks, Labuan is the place to go. 🐟



Labuan's well-decorated cement wreck, the *Tun Huang*.

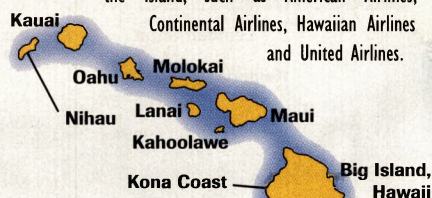
Photo/Eric Hanauer

DIVING THE RING OF FIRE Borneo

Hawaii

GETTING THERE:

Hawaii, the Big Island. Fly in from anywhere (swimming from L.A. is not advised). Most major airlines service the island, such as American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines and United Airlines.



FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit: Excellent year-round, but September to April is best diving because there's less chance of rain. **Topside Climate:** Tropical. Comfortably balmy and warm year-round with northeasterly tradewinds. Near coast, temperatures range from 68 to 83°F. **Water Temperature:** 74 to 82°F (average of 78°F). **Exchange Rate:** USD is easily, too easily, accepted. **Time Difference:** Eastern Standard Time minus 6 hours (5 during daylight-saving).

LIVE-ABOARDS & DIVE OPERATORS:

Kona Aggressor (800) 348-2628 www.aggressor.com • **Eco-Adventures** (808) 329-7116 www.eco-adventure.com • **Hualalai Watersports** (808) 325-8222 www.divesail.com • **Jack's Diving Locker** (808) 329-7585 www.jacksdivinglocker.com • **Kona Coast Divers** (808) 329-8802 www.konacoastdivers.com • **Manta Ray Dives of Hawaii** (800) 982-6747 www.rainbowdiver.com • **Planet Ocean Watersports—Hilo** (808) 935-7277 www.hawaiiidive.com • **Red Sail Sports** (800) 255-6425 www.redsail.com • **Sandwich Isle Divers** (888) 743-3483 www.sandwichisledivers.com • **Sea Paradise Scuba** (808) 322-2500 www.seaparadise.com

RESORTS:

Rainforest Retreat (808) 982-9601 www.rainforestretreat.com

RESOURCES:

Hawaii Visitors' and Convention Bureau (800) GO-HAWAII www.gohawaii.com • **AquaQuest** www.aquaquest.com • **Lonely Planet Guide to Hawaii** www.lonelyplanet.com • **Skin Diver Online** www.skin-diver.com

Papua New Guinea

GETTING THERE:

From the U.S., PNG is easiest reached via Cairns, Australia or Singapore. Air Niugini, the national airline, operates between Australia and Asia (in conjunction with Singapore Airlines). Port Moresby is the largest international gateway, but another international airport has just opened at Alotau (Milne Bay Province).



RESORTS:

Submarine Base Hotel (Rabaul) (011) 675-982-7200 (011) 675-982-7206 • **Walindi Plantation** (800) 443-0799 www.walindi.com

RESOURCES:

PNG Tourism Promotion Authority (011) 675-320-0211 www.paradiselive.org.pg • **PNG Divers Association Inc.** (011) 675-320-0211 www.pngdive.com • **Lonely Planet Guide to Papua New Guinea** www.lonelyplanet.com • **Skin Diver Online** www.skin-diver.com

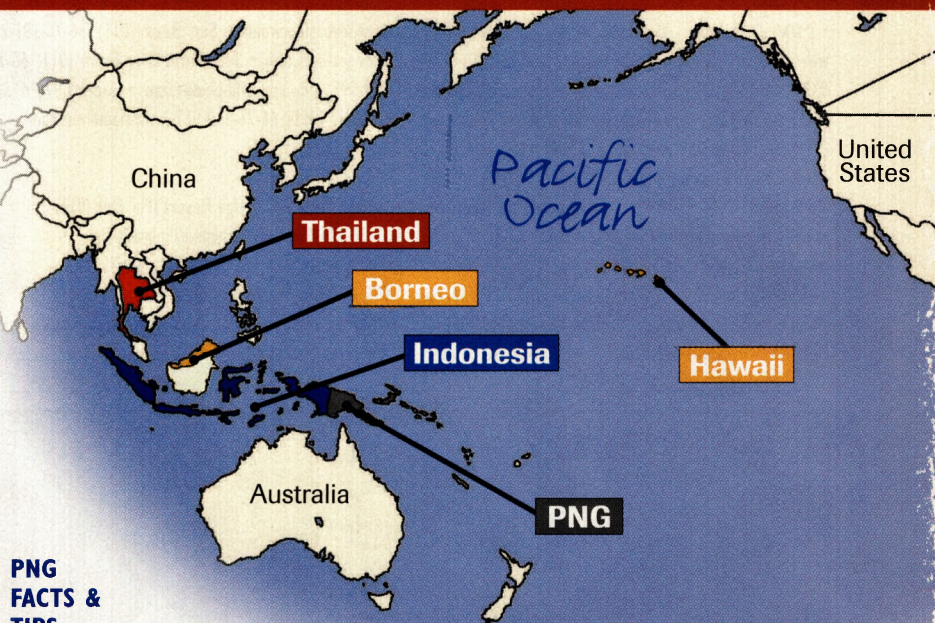
PNG FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit:

Mid-April through mid-December, although the tradewinds may blow fairly strong during July and August. January through March is the rainy season and cyclones are a possibility. **Topside Climate:** 73 to 89°F in coastal areas, 57 to 82°F in the highlands. Temperatures are coolest during the Southern Hemisphere during winter. **Water Temperature:** Average of 84°F in Kimbe Bay, Rabaul and other northern areas. Milne Bay and Port Moresby average 80°F. **Exchange Rate:** 1.00 (USD) = 2.933 (PGK) USD accepted in resort areas. **Time Difference:** Eastern Standard Time plus 10 hours.

LIVE-ABOARDS & DIVE OPERATORS:

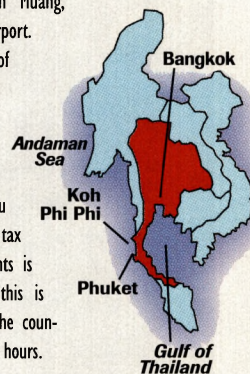
Blue Sea Charters (011) 61-145-130-880 www.blueseacharters.com • **Mike Ball Dive Expeditions** (888) MIKE-BALL www.mikeball.com • **M/V Barbarian** (011) 872-761-339-154 www.niuginidiving.com • **M/V Chertan** (011) 675-64-11167 www.chertan.com • **M/V Febrina** (800) 443-0799 www.febrina.com • **M/V Golden Dawn** (011) 675-325-6500 www.mvgoldendawn.com • **M/V Telita** (011) 675-321-4210 www.tufitelita.com • **Peter Hughes' Star Dancer** (800) 9-DANCER www.peterhughes.com • **Dive Centre Rabaul** (011) 675 982-1247 •



Thailand

GETTING THERE:

A host of international carriers (including Thai Airways International [THAI], China Airlines, Korean Airlines, Pam Am and CP Air) service Don Muang, Bangkok's major airport. Flights in and out of Thailand are often overbooked so it's imperative that you reconfirm ongoing flights as soon as you arrive. The departure tax on international flights is around US\$13 but this is waived if you're in the country for less than 12 hours.



THAILAND FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit: November through April (dry season). **Topside Climate:** Tropical. Dry season is mostly sunny, with occasional evening showers. **Water Temperature:** Usually 79 to 84°F, although thermoclines may temporarily drop temps to low 70s°F. **Exchange Rate:** 1.00 (USD) = 45 Thai Baht **Time Difference:** Eastern Standard Time + 12 hours (6 PM in New York is 6 AM the next day in Thailand).

LIVE-ABOARDS & DIVE OPERATORS:

M/V Aquaone (888) 996-2782 www.dive-aqualine.com • **Atlantis** (503) 212-5452 www.atlantis-asia.com • **Aquasports Phuket** (Phuket) (011) 66-76-223-394 www.dive-aquasports.com

Hawaii • Papua New Guinea • Thailand

• **M/V Discovery** (Santana Diving) (800) 925-4777 www.santanaphuket.com • **Dive Asia Pacific** (800) 962-0395 www.dive-asiapacific.com • **Dive Master Co. Ltd.** (011) 2-938-4216 www.divemaster.net • **M/V Fantasea** (011) 66-76-340-088 www.fantasea.net • **Genesis** (011) 66-76-280-607 www.genesis1phuket.com • **High Class Adventure** (800) 736-5651 www.highclass-adventure.com • **The Junk June Hong Chian Lee** (011) 66-76-294-235 www.thejunk.com • **PIDC Divers** (011) 66-76-280-644 www.pidcdivers.com • **Scuba Cat Diving** (011) 66-76-293-121 www.scubacat.com • **Scuba Quest** (011) 66-76-271-113 www.scuba-quest.com • **ScubaGlobe** (Phuket)

www.scubaglobe.com • **Sea Bees** (011) 66-76-381-765 www.sea-bees.com • **Sea World Dive Team** (011) 66-76-341-595 www.seaworld-phuket.com • **Siam Dive n' Sail** (Phuket) (011) 66-76-330-967 www.siamdivers.com

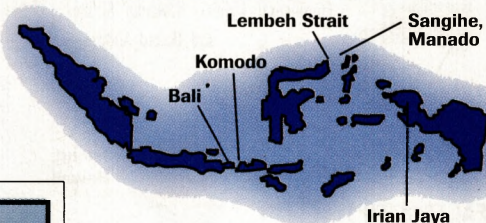
RESORTS:

Palm Beach Travelodge Resort (Phi Phi) (011) 66-76-214-654 www.phiphi-palmbeach.com • **PP Princess** (Koh Phi Phi) (011) 66 75 622-079 www.phuket.com/ppprincess • **Tonsai Village Resort** (Phi Phi) (011) 66-2-304-0423 www.sawadee.com/krabi/tonsavillage

RESOURCES:

Tourism Authority of Thailand www.tourismthailand.org • **Lonely Planet Guide to Thailand** www.lonelyplanet.com • **Skin Diver Online** www.skin-diver.com

Indonesia



GETTING THERE:

For **Manado Island, Sangihe Island and Lembeh Strait**, Singapore Airlines to Singapore and Silk Air to Manado. For **Tulamben and Komodo**, take any major airline to Bali or Silk Air from Singapore. For **Irian Jaya**, fly Silk Air or Garuda to Ujung Pandang; Pelangi or Merpati to Sorong. U.S. citizens receive a 60-day, non-extendable visa on arrival, but MUST have: a passport with six blank pages, six months validity remaining on passport and a return ticket out of Indonesia.

INDONESIA FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time to Visit: Manado & Sangihe Islands and Tulamben: March through October. Komodo and Irian Jaya: March through November. Lembeh Strait: Year-round. **Topside Climate:** Northwest monsoon (October to March) rain/overcast skies, esp. December to February. Southeast monsoon (April to September) sunny, windy in July-August. Daytime temperatures 80 to 85°F. **Water Temperature:** Manado & Sangihe Islands and Irian Jaya: 83 to 86°F. Lembeh Strait: 78 to 82°F. Tulamben: 80 to 83°F. Komodo: 76 to 86°F. **Exchange Rate:** 1.00 (USD) = approx. 9,100 (Rupiah). Traveler's checks, credit cards and foreign currencies other than USD are often not accepted in Indonesia. Currency must be clean and crisp with no writing and not torn or taped. **Time Difference:** Eastern Standard Time plus 11 hours (Irian Jaya is EST plus 12)

CONTACTS:

Manado & Sangihe Island: **Tasik Ria Resort** (011) 62-431-850445 www.tasikria.com • **Eco-Divers at Tasik Ria** (011) 62-431-824445 www.eco-divers.com • **Southeast Asia Liveaboards** (S/V Crescent) (011) 66-76-340606 www.sealiveaboards.com • **Lembeh Strait:** **Kungkungan Bay Resort** (925) 825-1939 (US office) www.kungkungan.com **Tulamben:** **Dive Paradise Tulamben** (011) 62-363-22918 Email: dive@bali.net • **Komodo:** **Dive Asia Pacific** (M/V Pelagian) (800) 962-0395 www.dive-asiapacific.com • **Irian Jaya:** **Irian Diving** www.iriandiving.com (011) 62-951-332222 • **Bagus Indonesia** (for lodging & air travel via Ujung

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Pandang) (011) 62-411-872234 Email: bagusin@indosat.net.id • **Bali: Bali Diving Agency** (011) 62-361-735284 www.divingparadise.com • **Bali Hai Diving Adventures** (011) 62-361-724062 • **Hotel Aneka Lovina** (011) 62-362-411212 www.indo.com/hotels/aneka • **Mas Lovina Beach Cottages** (011) 62-362-41237 • **Spice Dive** (011) 62-362-41305 www.damai.com/spicedive

RESOURCES:

Indonesian Tourist Promotion Office (North America) www.indonesianet.com • **Lonely Planet Guide to Indonesia** www.lonelyplanet.com • **Skin Diver Online** www.skin-diver.com

(Malaysian) Borneo

GETTING THERE:

More than 40 international airlines fly into Malaysia, while the national carrier, Malaysia Airlines, has a global network that spans six continents and a national network that covers more than 36 local destinations. There are six international airports in Malaysia with the main gateway being Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at Sepang in the state of Selangor. In addition, there are 14 domestic airports and airstrips for the rural areas. Malaysian Airline System (MAS) is the main domestic airline, but there are a growing number of others serving popular tourist destinations; these airlines include Pelang Air, Berfaya Air and Mofaz Air. Layang Layang Atoll is only accessible via charter flight from Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia. Usually the best route for U.S. residents is L.A. to Kuala Lumpur to Kota Kinabalu (overnight in Kota Kinabalu), then on to Layang Layang. • **Malaysia Airlines** (800) 552-9264 www.malaysiaairlines.com

BORNEO FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit: Maximum visibility is from April to October. Clothing recommendations: city casual. **Topside Climate:** Warm and tropical, but moderated by the surrounding ocean, so it's not deathly hot. Air temperatures are usually in the 80s°F, with a typical range of about 75 to 95°F. **Water Temperature:** 78 to 86°F. **Exchange Rate:** 1.00 (USD) = 3.8 Malaysian Ringgit. U.S. dollars and major credit cards are accepted at the resort on Layang Layang, at major hotels in Kota Kinabalu and Kuala Lumpur and in airport shops. It is only necessary to purchase local currency if one plans to make excursions into town or the countryside from Kota Kinabalu or Kuala Lumpur. **Time Difference:** Eastern Standard Time plus 12 hours.

LIVE-ABOARDS & DIVE OPERATORS:

Borneo Divers (011) 60-88-222-226 www.jaring.my/bdivers/ • **International Diving Expeditions** (800) 544-3483 www.love2travel.com • **Oceanic Explorer** (877) 348-3475 info@explorerliveaboards.com

RESORTS:

Layang Layang Resort (011) 603-2162-2877 www.layanglayang.com • **Sipadan Mabul Resort** (011) 60-88-230-006 www.sipadan-mabul.com.my • **Sipadan Water Village** (Mabul) (011) 60-89-752-996 www.sipadan-village.com.my • **The Waterfront**

Labuan Hotel (011) 6087-41-8111 E-mail: lclsbn@tm.net.my

RESOURCES:

Malaysia Travel (888) 359-8655 www.emalaysiatravel.com • **Sabah Tourism** www.sabahtourism.com • **Tourism Malaysia West Coast** (800) 336-6842 www.TourismMalaysia.com • **Tourism Malaysia East Coast** (800) 558-6787 www.VisitMalaysia.com • **Tourism Malaysia** www.tourism.gov.my • **Lonely Planet Guide to Malaysia** www.lonelyplanet.com • **Skin Diver Online** www.skin-diver.com

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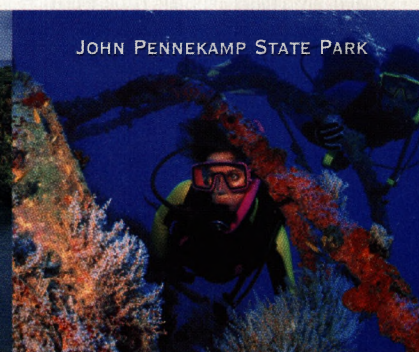


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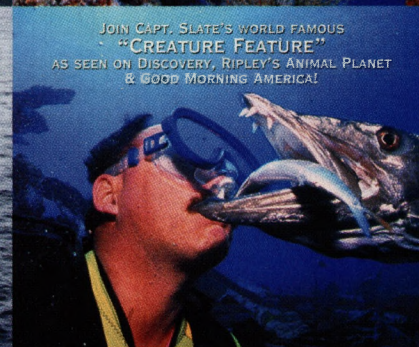
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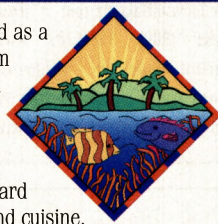
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BLUE ADVENTURES for Kids



BY WYLAND

HAVING CHUM FUN

IT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT. A sunny day aboard a ship. You've just cleared the harbor with nothing but blue ocean and gentle swells ahead. You reach the dive spot eagerly anticipating what lies below. But this time... something's not quite right. The boat bobs like a cork, listing from side to side.

Your mouth feels dry, your hands clammy. One of your dive buddies makes a joke. But you don't stick around for the punchline. You're too busy leaning over the side...chumming.

Not too many people know this, but I am prone to seasickness. Yes, I'm OK near the shore, but just a little ways

TO SAVE YOURSELF—AND YOUR CHILDREN—FROM HOURS OF GRIEF AT SEA, HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO EASE THE SYMPTOMS OF SEASICKNESS.

• STAY TOPSIDE WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

A funny thing happens below deck. Everything looks normal, but our inner ear tells us we're on a wild roller coaster ride. This really confuses the brain and makes seasickness even more intense. Going topside should reduce the symptoms.

• KEEP AN EYE ON THE HORIZON.

Seeing a stable, flat line around you can help control the effects of queasiness. It's also a good idea to position yourself where you can see oncoming waves and anticipate motion.

• **STAY AMIDSHIPS.** The pitch and rolling of a boat is less severe aft or amidships.

• **ACT FAST.** Don't wait for symptoms to get worse. Get topside, take in some fresh air and concentrate on the horizon as soon as you begin to feel sick.

• **DON'T PIG OUT.** A full stomach not only makes you more prone to seasickness, it gives you a little something extra to feed the fish with. Always eat light.

• TAKE A SEASICKNESS MEDICATION

BEFORE YOUR TRIP. Most anti-seasickness medications seem to work best at preventing symptoms if you take them about 30 minutes before your trip. They also seem to raise your tolerance of seasickness symptoms. Before giving an anti-seasickness medication to your child, though, it's best to consult your doctor first to find one that's most suitable.

• **LOOK FOR THE WARNING SIGNS.** If your child begins to yawn, feel weak or drowsy, this could indicate the onset of seasickness. More advanced symptoms include clammy skin, headaches and nausea. If your child hasn't taken a seasickness medication by this point, don't waste another minute.

Seasickness happens to everybody, even to world-famous marine life artists. Tell your kids not to be embarrassed if they feel sick. By staying in constant communication with them, you can take the necessary steps to make their trip as pleasant as possible.

out, and I turn as green as a shamrock. In the water—under it—no problem. But you better have a mop and pail aboard if you want to take me out where the big swells can have their way with me.

And I'm not the only one. I've seen experienced divers and sailors fall prey to seasickness, sometimes even when the water is calm. At some point, if they're at sea long enough, everyone encounters conditions that bother their stomach. According to Dr. Larry Ehrlich, a family physician in Orange, CA, children can be particularly susceptible to motion sickness. So if you're feeling a little queasy on that whale

**Seasickness
happens to
everybody....
Tell your kids
not to be
embarrassed...**

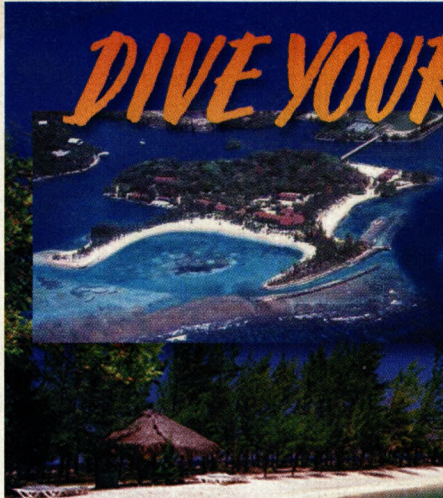
watching trip, you can bet your son or daughter is really struggling to keep down their bacon and eggs.

Seasickness is basically a fight between your brain and the elements. After years ashore, your brain is used to receiving the same old signals from the eyes, inner ear, muscles and joints. The message is that everything is stable, level and flat. Stepping aboard a ship throws these signals out of whack. The brain is furiously trying to adjust to this conflict. Too much exposure to this and we find ourselves heaving over a rail.

Eventually, though, the brain learns to adjust to the moving environment. It begins to anticipate the rolling movements aboard a ship, the conflict between what the brain expects and what it sees disappears, and the symptoms of seasickness go away. Some people have called this "getting your sea legs." I call it relief. 🐬

An internationally renowned marine life artist, Wyland has been diving and chumming around the world for the last twenty-five years.

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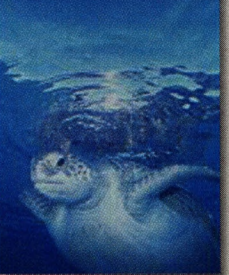
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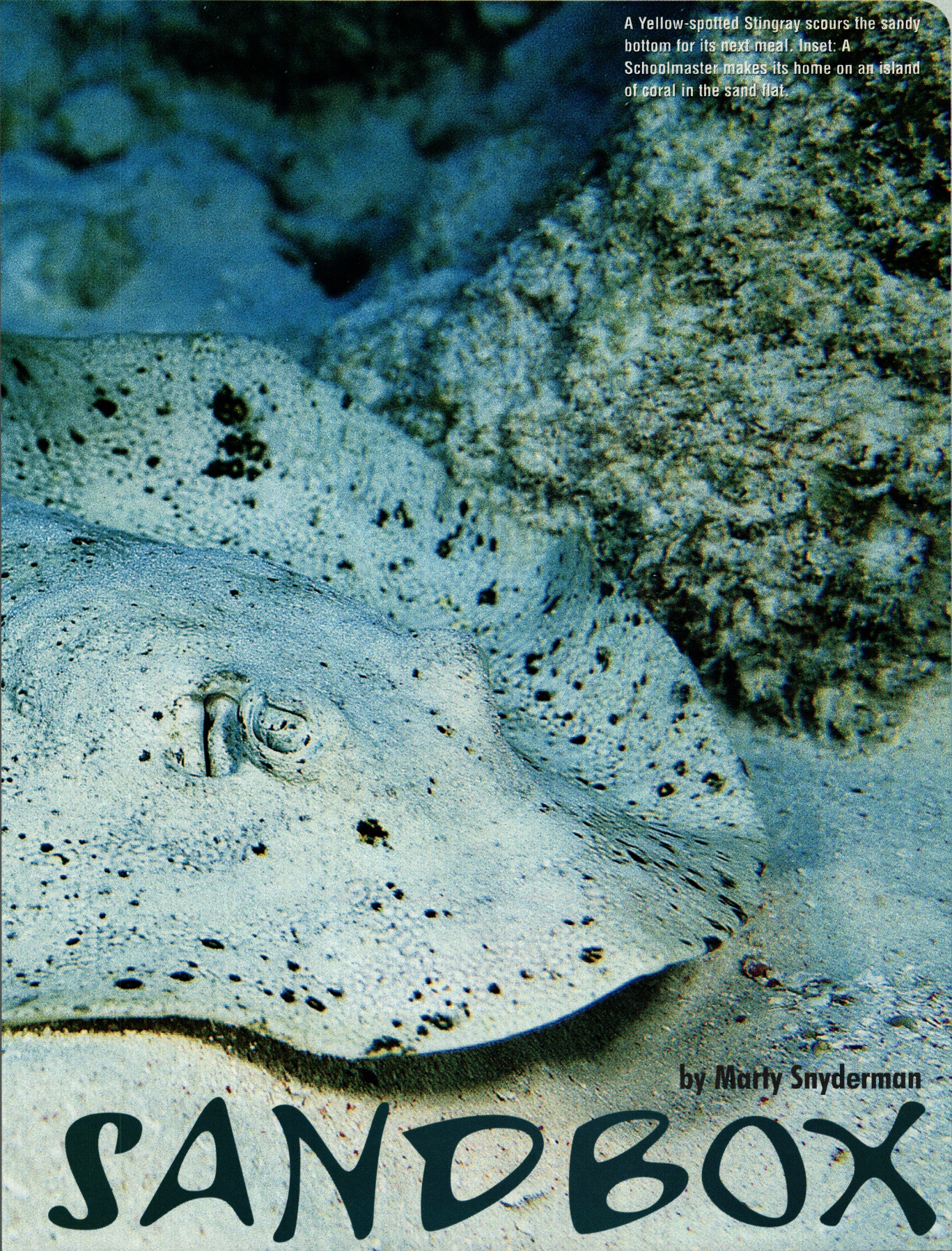
sk nearly any experienced diver what comes to mind when they hear the words, "Little Cayman," and almost without fail they will say, "Bloody Bay Wall." Synonymous with the island's diving, the wall has become Little Cayman's calling card. As a diving destination, the island could surely do a lot worse; Bloody Bay Wall is nothing short of spectacular. There is color and life everywhere you look.

Inside the wall the terrain is markedly different. The area is known as the Jackson Bight and this part of the park is essentially a continuous stretch of open sand with only an occasional patch reef to break up the seascape.



DIVER'S

Off the Wall Adventure



A Yellow-spotted Stingray scours the sandy bottom for its next meal. Inset: A Schoolmaster makes its home on an island of coral in the sand flat.

by Marty Snyderman

SANDBOX

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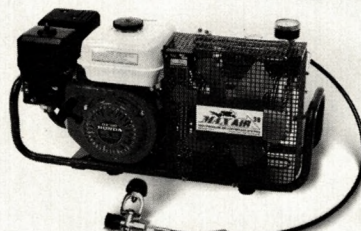
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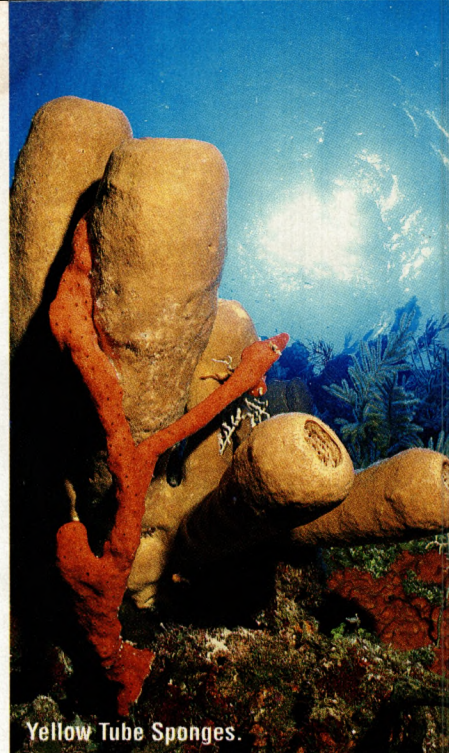
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Yellow Tube Sponges.

The sand biome is an ideal habitat to encounter feeding Eagle Rays and Southern Stingrays. If you approach slowly, it is often easy to get a close look as the rays grub through the sand using their shovel-shaped heads to root around and uncover prey.

Southern Stingrays are even more common than Eagle Rays. Sometimes they are at rest, buried in the sand, and all you see is a raised area where their heads are, or an outline of their winged bodies.

When feeding, Southern Stingrays are often accompanied by fiercely territorial Bar Jacks and other fish ranging from Yellowtail Snapper to triggerfish. These fish are vigilant while the rays feed, as they hope to steal an uncovered morsel. Hogfish also feed in the sand and can be seen plowing in, face first, or blowing jets of water down into the sand in an effort to reveal their dinner.

Other sand residents include razorfish, which are quick to disappear into the sand when approached; ornately decorated Peacock Flounders; Sand Tilefish, which possess mesmerizing fins that undulate along the length of their bodies; and, of course, Garden Eels.

Further west, between Mixing Bowl and Joy's Joy, the site which marks the western end of the wall, the terrain inside the wall changes. Here, patches

Plugged In to the Sea

As is the case with all rays, sharks, skates and Eagle Rays are equipped with special organs known as ampullae of Lorenzini. These gel-filled pits that are concentrated in the head and snout help them locate potential prey by detecting the electrical fields emitted by all living organisms. Sharks, rays and skates are the only animals equipped with these highly specialized organs, which allow these creatures to detect electrical fields that are as much as 10,000 times more faint than electrical fields detectable by any other known group of animals.

of hard pan and reef are broken up by smaller fields of sand. This stretch is loaded with active cleaning stations where fish ranging from Nassau Groupers, Tiger Groupers, barracudas, tangs, chromis, Creole Wrasse, chubs and Yellowtail Snapper enjoy a good going over from a variety of cleaners.

The rubble zones buzz with the constant activity of Yellowhead Jawfish and Sand Tilefish. These burrow-builders are constantly at work, building and maintaining their burrows or looking for food, which means plankton for the jawfish and a variety of small sand residents in the case of Sand Tilefish.

During a recent trip, I dived Lucas Ledges, Splitzville and Rockhouse Wall toward the southeast end of the

A pair of Flying Gurnards.



island with John Clamp, the Marine Park Officer, and Jim Viers, the Dive Operations Manager at the Little Cayman Beach Resort. I was specifically interested in diving a few less commonly visited sites. I asked Clamp what he thought the benefit to divers would be. He instantly responded with an enthusiastic, "You'll see: less pressure, pristine reefs and more big critters." He was right on the mark.

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LITTLE CAYMAN FACTS & TIPS: *Best Time To Visit:* Year-round, the diving is great. Each season offers different opportunities. *Topside Climate:*

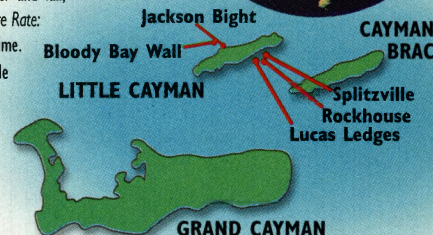
Tropical with average daytime highs in the low- to mid-80s°F, and nighttime lows in the mid-to-low 70s°F. It rains more during the summer and fall,

but the rain doesn't generally impact visibility underwater because there is little runoff from land. *Water Temperature:* 78 to 86°F. *Exchange Rate:* US\$1 = C\$1.25. USD is easily accepted. *Time Difference:* Same as Eastern Standard Time. The Cayman Islands do not go on daylight-saving time.

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RESOURCES: *Cayman Islands Department of Tourism* (800) 346-3313 www.divecayman.ky or www.caymanislands.ky • *Cayman Islands Department of Environment* <http://doe.8m.com> • *Lonely Planet Guide to Cayman Islands* www.lonelyplanet.com • *Sister Islands Tourism Association (SITA)* www.sisterislands.com • *Skin Diver Online* www.skin-diver.com



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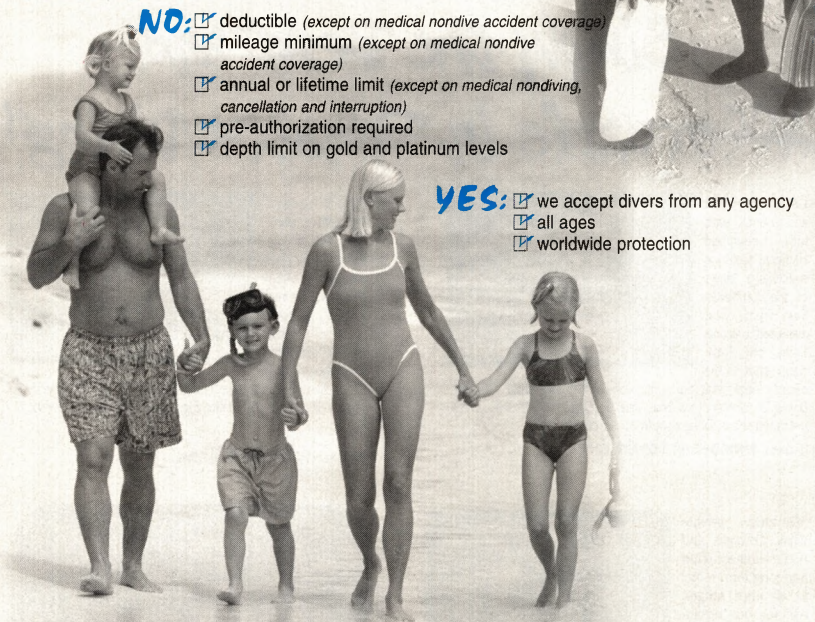
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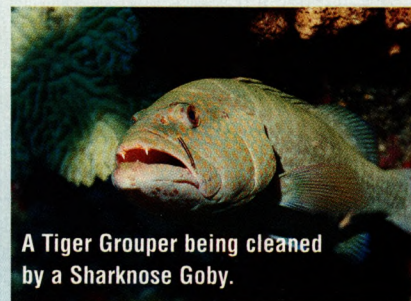
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The area was gorgeous with more relief to the reefs than those found to the southwest. Large stands of Elkhorn and Staghorn Coral can be admired in the shallows, while a variety of soft corals occur as well. The tops of the walls are a bit deeper, in the 60 to 80 foot range.

The walls are adorned with bright Yellow Tube Sponges, vase sponges, Red and Green Rope Sponges, basket sponges along with purple seafans and deepwater gorgonians. On every



A Tiger Grouper being cleaned by a Sharknose Goby.

dive we encountered a turtle, Spotted Eagle Ray, big grouper or a school of jacks. In the spur and groove formations and hard pan up in the shallows we found everything from resting Nurse Sharks to feeding turtles.

It's hard to believe that there are virtually unexplored waters in the Caribbean, and stranger yet that the area is Little Cayman. But this is the case all along the island's southern side and eastern end, where there is far more than one dive vacation's worth of scenery and marine life to enjoy.

Special thanks to Cayman Airways, Island Air, Little Cayman Beach Resort and Reef Divers, and the Cayman Islands Department of Environment.

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BY MICHELLE DANNER

IT'S SUMMERTIME! AND DO YOU KNOW what that means? It's time to take that dive trip you've been dreaming of all year long. Not sure where to go? Then come dive with us.

Skin Diver is sponsoring two great events in the month of August and you can get information on them by going to www.skin-diver.com.



Los Cabos, Mexico & Roatan, Bay Islands

First up is the 3rd Annual **Los Cabos Summer Dive Fiesta** held August 17 through 25, 2001. I can say firsthand—they don't call this a fiesta for nothin'. Last year we had a blast meeting new divers,

taking a sunset cruise, and of course, going on some spectacular dives. On just one of my first dives, I encountered a seahorse (an exciting find in these parts), played with sea lions and had a brief but memorable fly-by from a Modula Ray. Check out the live-on-location report from last year's fiesta at www.skin-diver.com/cabolive. As a rookie diver, this trip locked me into diving (good thing, too, cause that's my job). And I'm going back this year, wouldn't miss it for the world. We'll have coverage on the Web for all of you who can't make it. But it's not too late. Sign up now and maybe we'll see you in the Sea of Cortez.

For those who want to learn as well as play, the **Roatan Underwater Photo/Video Championship**, held August 25 through September 1, 2001, is just the ticket. Along with *Skin Diver* staff, world-famous underwater photographers/videographers will be on hand to offer tips, techniques and imaging wisdom to participants. Who knows, maybe your shots will grace the pages of *Skin Diver* magazine if you win the contest. You can stay in some of Roatan's finest resorts, dive all day and play all night. Now, that's what you call a vacation.

And if you're looking for a free trip—complimentary, no charge, freebie!—check out our website for the latest dive trip giveaway in the Maldives. Congratulations to the winners of our last contest who are right now—RIGHT NOW!—diving on the *Aqua Cat*, the newest live-aboard in the Bahamas.

Go to www.skin-diver.com to find out about events, giveaways and travel destinations. There's some summer traveling yet to be had, and it all starts at Skin Diver Online. 🐠



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Cayman's Gone Country

The Seaview Hotel in Grand Cayman is hosting two weekends (August 2 to 4, August 9 to 11) of country music featuring artists such as SheDaisy, Travis Tritt, The Kinley's, Rascal Flatts and many more. Yeee-haaaw!

Get down to Cayman! Call toll free (888) 695-7400, or e-mail bobsoto1@candw.ky.

Cabo Dive Fiesta

The *Skin Diver* Cabo Dive Fiesta is kicking off its 3rd year August 17 to 25. Dive your brains out off Cabo San Lucas, attend parties and events, participate in an underwater photo contest and treasure hunt.

For more information, visit www.skin-diver.com, or call (877) 479-3483.

Brac Wreck Birthday Bash

Cayman Brac is having a party! The weekend of September 14 to 16, the Sister Islands Tourism Association (SITA) will be celebrating the 5th Anniversary of the sinking of M/V *Capt. Keith Tibbetts*. *Skin Diver* will sponsor a fun-filled weekend of diving, music and parties.

For more details, visit www.sisterislands.com, or e-mail sita@candw.ky.

Chocolate Lobsters

The fourth annual Cabrillo Chocolate Lobster Dive is taking place on Saturday, September 22. Proceeds will benefit the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium Spring Outdoor Classroom, teaching 36,000 kids about the marine environment.

For the 411 on this event, visit www.cabrilloaq.org, or call (310) 548-7562. 

To submit a dive-related event for our Happenings section, e-mail allenr@emapusa.com.

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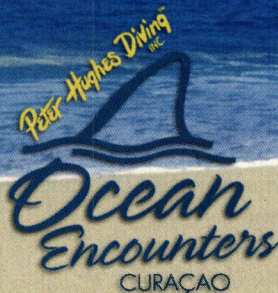
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Farming Coral on Dominica

IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA THEY learned to farm cattle for food. But it wasn't for another 5,000 years that humans began to farm in the ocean. Now, there are salmon farms in Maine, a sea turtle farm on Grand Cayman, a giant clam farm on Kosrae and the newest kind of farm, a coral farm, on Dominica.

Alan Lowe, president of Applied Marine Technology, discovered the secret to farming coral in his home saltwater aquarium. Now, his recently-patented process is operating on a massive scale on the hillsides of Dominica. He is growing thousands



of pieces of coral on his coral farm, which consists of 128 shallow tanks, each holding 250 gallons of sea water.

"We picked Dominica after a water study showed us that it had some of the cleanest water in the Caribbean," says Lowe.

Already, AMT has a contract with the Caribbean island of Mustique to seed a man-made reef with thousands of pieces of coral. Over time, the corals will grow over the cement bases and look natural. Mustique suffered heavy damage to its precious few natural reefs during Hurricane Lenny last year.

In addition, AMT has launched an "adopt a coral" program where people can have a piece of coral planted in their name on a reef restoration project in Dominica for \$65. —Jonathan Bird

For more information, visit www.appliedmarinetech.com.

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*100% 1992-93 FETIP: 1993-95 100% placed 4 out of 8 types of Instructor programs, 95% placed on an average of all Institute programs including Divermaster and Repair Tech. As a result of a vocational program review, locally collected vocational student follow-up data have been used to compile this information. The methods used to collect this information are specified by state laws and rules. These data are available for inspection upon request. Licensed by: State Board of Non-Public Career Education, Tallahassee, FL, License #94. Composite Photo: Underwater class on the Reef at the Institute.

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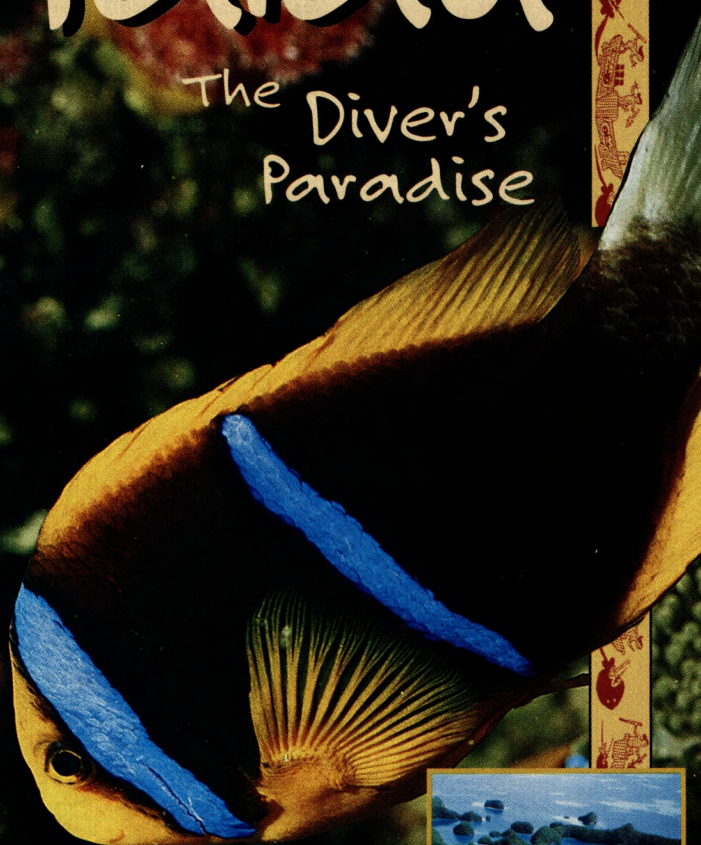
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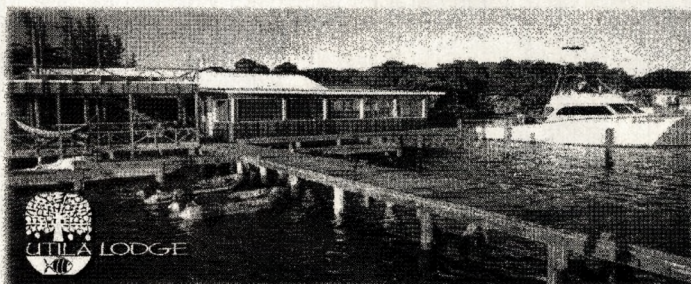
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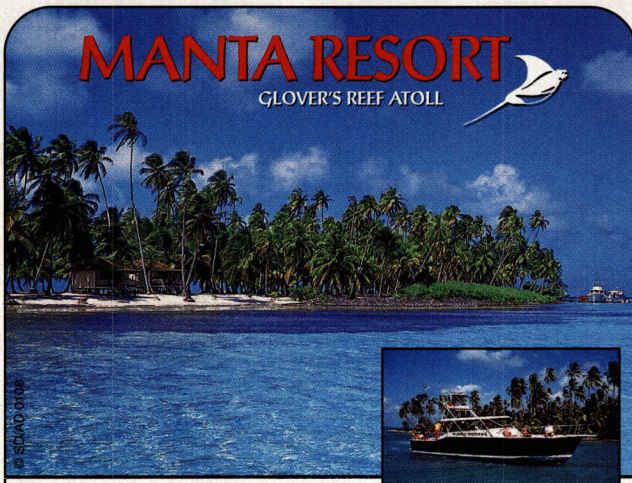
The afternoon sessions take place at the Faulkner Academy under the direction of a marine biologist. Numerous hands-on lab experiences include a shark lab, an algae lab and a plankton lab. Also included are exciting arts and crafts activities, including fish printing and coral reef making.

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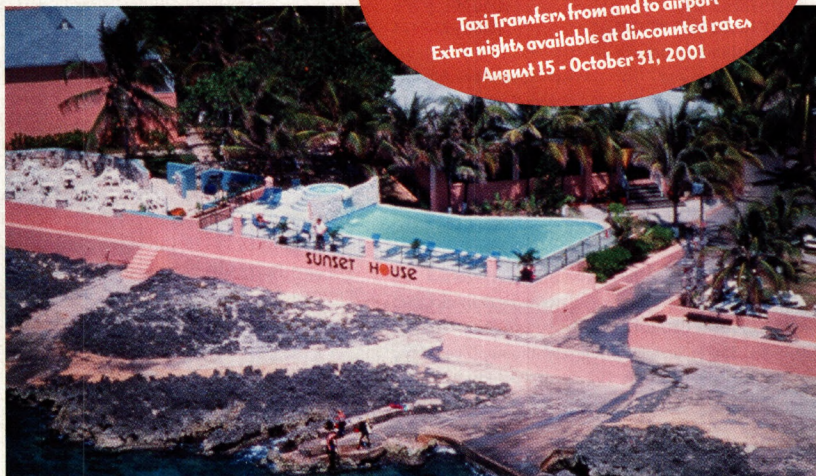
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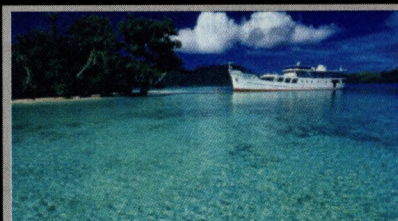
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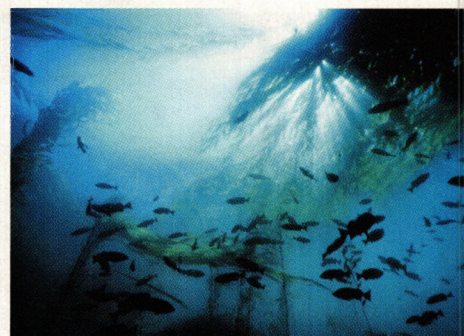
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Kelp Harvesting Banned

ON FRIDAY, APRIL 6, SCUBA DIVERS arrived at Monterey's Hilton Hotel to encourage the California Fish and Game Commission to pass legislation curbing the kelp harvesting that takes place along California's central coast. More than 80 sup-

porters attended the meeting; dozens had the opportunity to voice their opinions. Their impassioned arguments prompted the commission to adopt an environmentally friendly statewide plan for kelp management.



Photo/Georgienne Bradley

The new plan, effective for five years, prohibits kelp harvesting throughout the marine sanctuary, from April through July. Additionally, it bans harvesting year-round along part of the historic Cannery Row.

The "Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Final Kelp Management Report: Background, Environmental Setting and Recommendations," commissioned by a consortium of government agencies, examines both sides of the kelp harvesting issue. The comprehensive report documents a variety of scientific and economic viewpoints from both sides.

One scientific study reports that more than 4,200 individual creatures were found within the base, or "holdfasts," of five individual kelp plants. Supporters of the harvesting ban claim that these creatures living within the kelp forest strata are routinely harvested along with the kelp. At best, this upsets the delicate balance of the marine ecosystem; at worst, it threatens some of the creatures with extinction.

The Monterey County Herald reported that the commission had been postured to adopt regulations that banned kelp harvesting along part of Cannery Row, but extended the no-take zone after throngs of "kelp lovers" articulated their political position at the commission meeting. While some attendees thought that legislated kelp protection should be even more ardent, most were ecstatic. 🐟

—Georgienne Bradley

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Waiving Your Right to Bare Arms

BY KARL SHREEVES

IMAGINE YOU'RE ON A DIVE BOAT. Although there's no tek diving going on, you notice two divers who also tek dive. They're in standard single cylinder rigs, but somehow, you can tell they're tekkies.

How? Chances are, it's their gauges. Besides being high-end models like tek diving demands, these divers wear them on their arms. They use standard, simple SPGs. Consoles and air-integrated computers are conspicuously absent. Although, as a friend of mine points out, gauges on the arms seem to sling us back to the '60s. But, tek divers eschew consoles and air-integrated computers for several good reasons. It's not quite as Neanderthal as it might look.

Profile: Many resort divemasters would love to see everyone go back to wrist gauges. They'll be the first to tell you that consoles not only protrude, but they're the number one coral-basher right after fin tips. In tek diving, protruding consoles or dangling hose-mounted gauges go beyond potential for injuring the environment to potential for injuring the diver. Anything that protrudes from the tek diver's ample kit can hang up and snag on a line, net or monofilament—all typical in tek diving environments.

Hands-free Info: You're wearing a drysuit and descending along an anchor line in a current. You already wish you had four hands so you can adjust your BC, equalize your ears, inflate your suit and hang onto the line simultaneously. If you have to grab a console to watch your depth and direction, now you need another hand. Tek divers mount their gauges on their arms because it's easy to see them, even with both hands occupied.



Photo/Michelle Van Vliet

A wrist-mount computer not only allows tekkies to free their hands, it also enables them to swap out necessary equipment for each dive with ease, and decreases the potential injury to the environment from dangling gauges.

Outside the Clutter: Put on four stage bottles. Having little bulk, you pull an SPG into view like an agile motorcycle weaving past heavy traffic. A console is more like a tractor trailer in the same jam. It stays right where it is until everything else moves.

Houdini Option: Although arm instruments have less tangle potential than consoles, the potential is still there. Unlike a console, though, you can cut wrist straps with ease (if you have to in the worst case). Entanglement on an arm gauge is typically easier to see because it's away from your body.

Same Eggs, Different Baskets: If you're using a standard SPG and a computer and one fails, you have the other. If you're using an air-integrated computer, a computer failure knocks out both. That's not a big deal in recre-

ational diving, where you can just head up. But in tek diving, just heading up typically isn't an option.

Equipped for the Mission: Arm-mounting makes it much easier for tek divers to wear exactly the instruments they need for the dive. Swapping instruments in a console isn't nearly as convenient.

About the only drawback to arm-mount gauges is that they easily hang up when sliding in and out of your harness. Most tekkers solve this by putting on the harness first when kitting up, then taking off the gauges first, after diving. Not exactly a major dilemma. 🐟

Karl Shreeves is VP, Technical Development for DSAT and PADI, and an avid tekkie.

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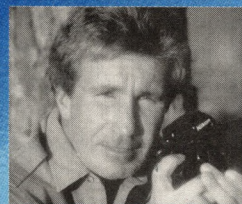
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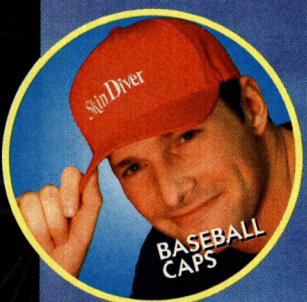


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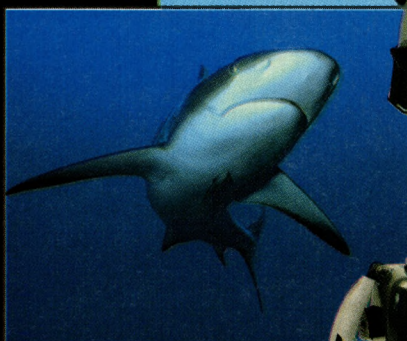
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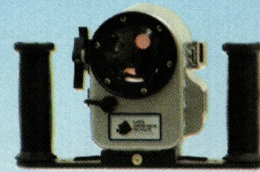
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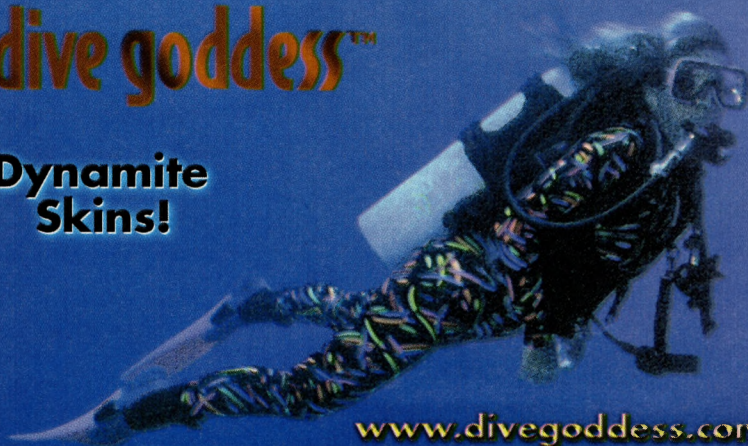
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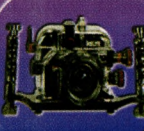
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Carl Roessler—The Lewis and Clark of Dive Travel

From the moment Carl Roessler took over Sea & Sea travel in 1972, the world began to shrink. He tirelessly scoured the world's oceans for the wildest, most pristine and unique diving, then rounded up a stable of luxury live-aboards to take divers to these lonely corners. In fact, through Sea & Sea, Carl helped create the live-aboard industry. Many of today's must-do dives were first popularized by Carl—in places such as Palau, Australia's Coral Sea, Galapagos, Truk Lagoon, Papua New Guinea, Malpelo and the Maldives. In 1976, right in the middle of the *Jaws* fright fest, he started sending divers to Australia to experience (in a protective cage) the toothy star of the film firsthand. His Whale Shark experiences off Ningaloo, Western Australia, were the first of their kind. And much of what he experienced he shared with the readers of *Skin Diver* through his incredible photographs and stories. Although Sea & Sea closed its doors in the late '90s, Carl continues to search for new places to dive and acts as an adviser to divers looking for great diving and to dive boat owners looking for new markets, through his website www.divexpert.com. 🐟



Photo/Pam Christman

Bob Marx—X Marks the Spot

Bob Marx's life has been filled with so many far-flung adventures that he will likely never have a peer in the world of underwater treasure hunters and underwater archaeologists. He has spent the last five decades searching the seas for shipwrecks (having dived more than 3,000 pre-18th century wrecks) and, until about five years ago, spent 250 days a year in the water. He even started the first hotel in Cozumel. Using that as a base, he searched the Caribbean, asking local fishermen if they might know the locations of cannon or ballast stones. His accomplishments and discoveries extend from archaeological excavations in Port Royal, Jamaica, to the discovery of two Manila Galleons off the coast of Guam, the *Neustra Senora del Pilar* (1690) and the *Neustra Senora del Buen Viaje* (1754), to shipwreck discoveries in the Mediterranean dating from the 5th and 6th centuries. But these are merely random selections from his overwhelming resume, which grows daily. 🐟



Mike Ball—King of Oz

For American divers, Mike Ball's live-aboards have been synonymous with Australian diving. Since starting his business in 1969, the phrase, "the Mike Ball experience" has come to represent a top-class live-aboard diving down under. His itineraries vary to suit almost any divers' needs, from three-day trips to Cod Hole and the wreck of the *Yongala*, to full-blown 10-day expeditions to the Coral Sea for some wild and woolly aquatic adventures. His live-aboard fleet (*Spoilsport*, *Supersport*, *Watersport*), based in Townsville and Cairns, Queensland, has even grown beyond Australia to Papua New Guinea, with offerings to Milne Bay and Kavieng aboard the *Paradise Sport* and the Mike Ball-owned *Telita*. 🐟

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Jim Church—Lens Master

Jim Church is one of the true pioneers of modern underwater photography. Many of today's professionals got started with a camera in one hand, and Jim's articles and books in the other. His *Essential Guide to Nikonos Systems* is a must-have for any budding shooter. A genuine mentor, Jim has also been imparting his knowledge, experimenting and growing the field of underwater photography and in more recent years, underwater video, through the pages of *Skin Diver* since 1966. His expertise and teaching skills have made his Aggressor Fleet photo trips one of the most popular live-aboard training vacations, year after year. He has also authored or co-authored seven books. And, despite what the photo (from 1974) shows, he has in fact given up flashbulbs. 🐟



Caribbean Trumpetfish

BY NED AND ANNA DeLOACH WITH PAUL HUMANN

WE HAVE ALL SUFFERED THE ANNOYING company of overly persistent panhandlers following us down the sidewalk, and I can't help but think of these pesky characters every time I see a trumpetfish trailing a foraging fish about the reef. The hunting tactic, known as shadow-feeding, allows the stealthy two- to three-foot predators

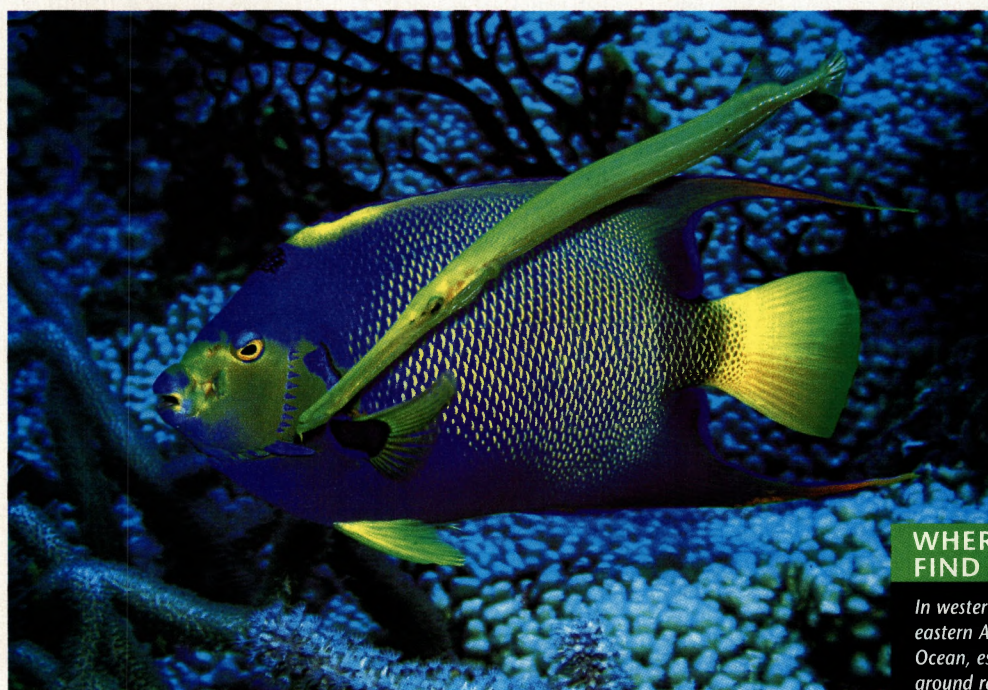
with bluish snouts and golden. Each type tends to hitch rides with fish of a similar hue. Brownish individuals generally associate with groupers and parrotfish; those with blue snouts join feeding aggregations of Blue Tang, and the golden phase commonly shadow Spanish Hogfish and, in rare instances, Queen Angelfish.

Day in, day out trumpetfish are the most active and entertaining piscivores (fish eaters) on the reef. When on the prowl, trumpetfish swim horizontally just above the bottom. Their long, thin bodies barely cast shadows as they weave their way through a maze of jagged terrain. When targeting a meal, they assume a stationary, vertical head-down posture, which can be maintained for minutes

at a time. Downward strikes generated from bowed bodies are short and quick. Mouths flared like

WHERE TO FIND THEM

In western and eastern Atlantic Ocean, especially around reefs where they usually hide among gorgonians.

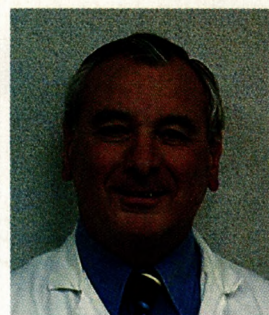


In rare instances, a golden Caribbean Trumpetfish will shadow a Queen Angelfish (pictured) in order to snap up unsuspecting prey.

to slip unseen into striking range of unsuspecting prey. Although the relationship proves extremely beneficial for the wily trumpetfish, it provides nothing but aggravation for the host. And like freeloaders everywhere, trumpetfish occasionally push their luck. I have watched them crowd parrotfish until they go temporarily berserk—swimming erratically and slamming about in desperate attempts to ditch their unwanted hitchhikers.

Caribbean Trumpetfish come in three basic color schemes: brown, gray

trumpets engulf small fish, generally measuring less than two inches in length, although a five-inch squirrelfish was found inside a two-foot individual. A feeding study recorded only eight successful strikes out of 45 attempts during 19 hours of observed stalking. Such a low capture rate helps explain why the hunters take every advantage, even at the expense of strangers. 🐟



Your Questions Answered

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.

THIS CORRESPONDENCE COVERS SOME common and some rare disorders that can interfere with diving. We find more people with chronic illness are able to dive, but special cautions must be taken in these cases.

Addison's Disease

Q: I am taking cortisol for Addison's disease. I have injectable cortisone in the event of an emergency. Any other precautions you can think of?

A: Addison's disease is caused by failure of the Adrenal gland with loss of the normal cortisone hormone needed to sustain blood pressure. My concern with Addison's disease is the problem with maintaining blood pressure during stress. If you are injured you could develop shock because of lack of cortisol response to stress. Having injectable cortisone is an important safety measure. I would also be concerned about your tolerance for exercise and for cold stress. You might have a stress test to be sure you can maintain your blood pressure with exercise. If your blood pressure responds normally to exercise, you should be able to perform low stress, warm water diving in a safe manner.

Swimmer's Ear

Q: My 16-year-old son develops an ear infection when diving consecutive days. After four to five days, he starts complaining of ear discomfort, which almost always leads to an ear infection. Is there a particular ear drop solution that he could use prior to diving that might help diminish this problem?

A: Your description suggests that your son gets external otitis or swim-

mer's ear. This is usually due to water retained in his external ear canal that eventually becomes infected. I usually recommend a solution called Domeboro Otic Solution. This is available in most drug stores, but might need a prescription. He should squeeze a few drops in each ear before diving. After diving, he should remove the water from his ear canals, then put another few drops into both ears.

Atrial Fibrillation

Q: I am on Coumadin, Toprol and Tikosyn (dofetilide—a new antiarrhythmic) for atrial fibrillation. I'm looking for some guidance regarding the risks of diving while taking these medications.

Some
medications can
interfere with
diving, while
others make
diving possible.

A: Cautions about Coumadin are related to ear and sinus squeeze, where excess bleeding can occur if you are taking a blood thinner. Toprol, a beta blocker, will not cause a problem with diving, although some people complain about cold hands and feet when diving in cold water. There is no experience to date with Dofetilide and diving. It is a new medication that has potential side effects in

divers. There have been several cases of serious arrhythmias in swimmers with a problem called long Q-T syndrome. Dofetilide causes this syndrome and potentially could result in heart arrhythmias when diving. You should ask your cardiologist to use another antiarrhythmic medication if you want to continue diving.

Headache

Q: I'm a novice diver (20 dives), but take great care regarding my ascent rate and safety stop on all dives. Sometimes I notice a headache after coming out of the water, which varies in intensity and usually only persists for five to 10 minutes. I'm not sure if it is depth related, because the worst one I experienced was on a shallow (12 feet) night training dive. A friend mentioned it might have something to do with my sinuses not clearing fully, but I didn't experience any ache or squeeze and my ears clear well.

A: Headaches as you describe, occurring upon ascent and lasting five to 10 minutes, are often sinus headaches. If the headache is in the forehead area, it is likely to be frontal sinuses that are obstructed. If the headache is in the middle of your head or on the top of your head, it can be arising from the sphenoid sinus. Other causes of headaches associated with diving include carbon monoxide poisoning, carbon dioxide intoxication due to skip breathing, elevated blood pressure, arterial air embolism and air leaking from the mastoid air cells into the spinal fluid. 🐡

More questions and answers about diving disorders can be found at www.scubamed.com.

time capsules

By Tiffany H. Carey

Each month *Skin Diver* looks back through its pages in search of those little nuggets of yesteryear—old equipment, trends of the time, new discoveries—that echo the times and may surprise or shock us. It's good to know your roots and how discoveries of old have helped shape diving today.

1990

ROV Developed, Wreck Discovered, \$450 Million Recovered



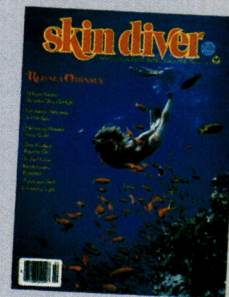
In January 1990, long-time contributor and greatly missed friend of *Skin Diver*, E.R. Cross reported on the amazing discovery of the SS *Central America*, which yielded an estimated \$450 million in gold. The 272-foot steam vessel was used in the early 1850s to transport the newly rich and their gold back to San Francisco. On September 9, 1857, a Caribbean hurricane sunk the vessel, leaving 155 survivors, taking 425 fatalities and tons of gold. Nearly 132 years later, the Columbus-America Discovery Group (C-ADC) used its remotely operated vehicle (ROV), named Nemo, to explore the wreck. C-ADC specifically designed Nemo for U/W archaeology, and in part for this mission, which resulted in the recovery of rare gold bars and coins. James Cameron should make a movie about this one. 🐟



Pushing Ice

1979

The Trenton Flying Frogmen don't just dust off their fins or take an equipment inventory to kick off a new scuba season. As reported in the February 1979 issue, this Southern Ontario scuba club likes to win the annual Peterborough Ice Floe Race. The Trident Underwater Club of Peterborough hosts this event, which requires divers to kick, float, paddle and navigate their ice floe (floating ice formed in large sheets) down two and a half miles of the Otonabee River. The winning team, for the third year straight, was the Trenton Flying Frogmen, completing the race in just 26 minutes and 54 seconds. As a side contest, clubs were encouraged to wear costumes. The Explorers Club of Pittsburgh won for floating a working replica of R2D2 on their floe.



The event was also featured in an issue of *Playboy*, calling it the "most prestigious event of its kind in the world." And you thought *Skin Diver* and *Playboy* had nothing in common. 🐟

Not Going Out on a Limb

1956



"The coming season of colder water around the country will bring divers many king-sized goose bumps and they will soon decide to unwrap last year's suit or purchase their first rubber exposure suit." *Skin Diver's* first and only issue dedicated entirely to the then controversial debate about whether or not to buy a wet or drysuit appeared in the November 1956 issue. The issue featured a pictorial spread of both types of suits in action entitled, "Wet and Dry That Suits the Nation." With pro and con articles, such as "To Stay Warm, Stay Dry" and "The Future Lies in Foam Neoprene," to "Wet Has an Enormous Advantage" and "Wet Suit is Better Investment," the ultimate decision on which to buy was left to the reader's discretion. As the editorial concludes, "...we have not attempted to publish our own conclusions as to the best type...of exposure suit for you. This would be 'going out on a limb.' We're not tree climbers...." However, it looks

as if the editor's true opinion was evidenced on the cover. 🐟

Bootie Call

BY TOM CONROY • ILLUSTRATION BY KIM WILSON BRANDT

I HAVE ALWAYS PRIDED MYSELF ON BEING AN EXPERIENCED diver. As a teenager growing up in Florida I was a “dock rat,” spending my free time getting to know the local captains and helping out with dives years before I became officially certified. I learned through experience and not in the classroom, and as an immature teenager, I was darn proud of it. But even though I had logged over 100 dives, it was only a matter of time before this uneducated cockiness would nearly cost me everything.

In 1985, while living in Alabama, I heard a tavern tale in my local haunt. The tale was about a car full of illegal money dumped off a high cliff during a police chase some months back. This occurred at a deserted lake that was in fact an abandoned rock quarry. The story burned in my mind for days. After failing to find a scuba friend who had the time to embark on this trek, I broke the first and most important rule of responsible diving (which, by the way, I had done many times before)—I decided to go alone.

The next day I made the three-hour drive, taking dirt road after dirt road until I found the little-used logging road that lead to the quarry. Because of the road’s poor condition, I parked and decided to walk the rest of the way.

It was an additional 15 minutes of walking in the sweltering heat with more than 100 pounds of gear before I found my destination. The view was incredible. I found myself standing on a 30-foot-high cliff overlooking an isolated Hawaiian-esque setting complete with the echoed chirping of birds, lush vegetation and a crystal-clear circular body of water with about a quarter-mile radius. It was heaven, and I was going to be rich!

I eagerly went down a side trail until I made it to the

small beach. As I finished putting on my gear, I realized I had left my old, rugged Converse All-Stars at home (booties were for wimps!). My feet would have to be unprotected until I got to a depth where I was buoyant enough to put on my fins.

Rock quarries are huge holes dug by a steam shovel in solid rock, usually for gravel or some specific mineral. The soft sand I was walking on soon disappeared, and my shoeless feet were getting sliced on the rock as I slipped deeper into the water. I pushed away from the wall and tried kicking in an attempt to get to the surface, but the pain from my shredded feet was too intense. I sank even further; blood seeped from my wounds. I was starting to panic.

Eventually, my mind finally cleared and I remembered my buoyancy compensator. I hit the button and my vest began to inflate, stopping the descent and slowly taking me to the surface. Although I made it to the top, there were still 100 yards dividing me from the safe-

ty of the shore, and I felt like I was losing lots of blood. I methodically paddled with my hands on the still, quiet surface until I got to land. Thank goodness this was not a place with a current. Still bleeding, I took off my gear and quickly ripped my T-shirt to pieces in order to wrap my feet. In a seated position, I pushed myself backward with my arms, sliding myself up the path to the top of the cliff and over the bumpy logging road until I reached my car. By the time I got there it was dark, I was alone, my bottom was sore...and I was extremely lucky.

My lesson? No matter how experienced and confident you are, each and every dive is potentially dangerous. Never, never, never, never dive alone...and always wear your booties. 🐟



Skin Diver (ISSN 0037-6345) Published Monthly Vol. 50 No. 8. Published by *emap usa, inc.*, 6420 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90048-5515. Periodicals postage paid at Los Angeles, CA and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for 1 year (12 issues): U.S., APO, FPO and U.S. Possessions \$11.97. Canada add \$13.00 (U.S. funds) per year sales tax and GST-reg. #R72093125RT0001. Foreign orders add \$15.00 (U.S. funds). Florida residents add 6% sales tax. Subscription inquiries within the U.S. phone (800) 800-3487. Subscription inquiries outside the U.S. phone (303) 678-0354. CONTRIBUTIONS: Should be mailed to 6420 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90048-5515. They must be accompanied by return postage and we assume no responsibility for loss or damage thereto. Any material accepted is subject to such revision as is necessary in our sole discretion to meet the requirements of this publication. Upon publication, payment will be made at our current rate, which covers the author's and/or contributor's right, title and interest in and to the material mailed including but not limited to photos, drawings, charts, and designs, which shall be considered as text. The act of mailing a manuscript and/or material shall constitute an express warranty by the contributor that the material is original and in no way an infringement upon the rights of others. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Skin Diver, P.O. Box 52595, Boulder, Colorado 80322-2595.

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